

The Gospel of Mark

The Teaching, Healing and Suffering of the King

Miles O'Neill / 2014

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Overview of Mark's Gospel

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospel accounts. It has historically been criticized for being overly simplistic and thus inferior to Matthew and Luke. But that is far from the truth and more recent scholarship has shown both Matthew and Luke's dependence on Mark as a source. Mark's compact style, far from being inferior, highlights the urgent message of its author and thus leads to its power. It is the most action packed and succinct of the four Gospel accounts. Its central and fast paced themes punch us with clarity. It moves quickly to make its point that Jesus is the suffering servant king who came to establish his kingdom on earth.

Jesus is introduced by Mark as the Messiah foretold of old but with striking contrast to the cultural assumption. He does not come with exterior power and might, but rather as a humble servant. But the reader must not mistake humility and service with lack of power and authority. For that is the great irony that Mark pronounces. The King of the universe holding ALL power and authority comes to reign through His teaching, His serving and His suffering. Mark brings us to his conclusion succinctly through the often used word "immediately". He rushes us to the end for which Jesus came- to suffer and die upon a cross. In fact his model of suffering is the realm to which his followers are called. In a world of suffering and hardship we also look forward with hope to receiving the glory alongside Christ. What was achieved in those fateful days of His death and resurrection has made an eternal, spiritual and physical difference. There is no more important message. He came to heal the physical and emotional damages of sin now, today! But He also comes to finally do away with sin's consequences forever and set us free for the lives that we were originally created.

Before you open this study and indeed Mark's Gospel itself, I must warn you, if you really look into it, you will be shocked. You will be, or at least should be, uncomfortable at the person of Jesus as Mark introduces Him. This is a version of the Gospel story that is very important. For herein Jesus breaks down the stereotypes you may have, indeed the stereotypes the culture at large has. Herein you see a real Jesus. A divine, yes, but human Jesus. He is full of emotion, suffering, pain and even anger! Time and time again, as I have studied this book it has left me uneasy, wrestling with Jesus, wondering if the Jesus that I have in my mind is just a little made up!

How do I make sure that Jesus is not just a figment of my imagination, a puzzle of pieces made up out of my southern with Christian American background? If that imaginary Jesus were to come face to face with the Nazarene of the Gospels, who would win? How would I know the "right" one won?
Mark- The Gospel of Passion, Michael Card IV Press 2012

Mark introduces his message with a word that would have grabbed the attention of the audience of his day. The use of "gospel" or "euaggelion" (evangel) in Greek, was commonplace in the ancient world. Gospel literally means "good news". Upon the defeat of an enemy, the armed forces would return to a city proclaiming "the gospel". Furthermore, Paul uses the word "Gospel" over 80 times in his writing. Matthew and Luke refer to the "Gospel". However, the way Mark uses this word, "gospel" is brought to us with a twist. Mark refers not to the Gospel, but to "a gospel". It is not that he is presenting one gospel over against another gospel, but he is referring to his very writing as Gospel literature. *"It is the telling of a story of a life which is at the same time a testimony. It is one of the most extraordinary statements in the whole Bible". (Michael Card, The Gospel of Passion)* It is not just good news, but it is the testimony of the person of Jesus who brings the Good News! Here is Jesus Mark tells us and He brings good news.

Finally, before you begin, here is a brief overview of how Mark's Gospel works. He does not start with the family lineage or birth of Jesus as Matthew and Luke but moves straight towards the beginning of His ministry. In the first half of Mark, we are introduced to all that Jesus says and does in the region of Galilee. He goes about teaching and healing announcing and also showing us the design of His kingdom. He heals the sick, makes the lame rise, all the while teaching that the coming of His kingdom is the coming of his authority and reign. The established rule's opposition increases and tensions rise as he addresses the crowds that follow Him. Then quickly, "immediately" (used over 40x in Mark) we are moved to the first climax of the book, Mark 8:27-29. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am"? Peter triumphantly answers, "You are the Christ"! That is Marks message.... Here is Jesus, the

Christ (Messiah)! With that great pronouncement (and probably Peter doesn't quite understand what he has proclaimed!)

In the second half of the book, Mark moves us immediately towards the great irony for which Jesus came. He begins to move away from addressing the crowds to preparing his disciples. He says that the Christ must be rejected and suffer at the hands of the people for whom he would die. What a strange message to those following a king! People can barely listen and the Jerusalem audience is finally stirred into murderous frenzy. In an overwhelming display of the humanity of Jesus, he is finally rejected and abused before our eyes. The disciples, in contrast to the realization of chapter 8, are dejected and hopeless. That is...until the three women go to prepare Jesus' body for decomposition. The greatest news that could ever be proclaimed becomes apparent. Jesus will not be crushed, but only bruised. The tomb is empty and we are told to spread this great Gospel! Jesus truly is the King He proclaimed and it won't be long until he returns and establishes His kingdom in power, once and for all!

How to use this study

This study is designed to be used by either a group or an individual to study and grow from Mark's Gospel. As I write these words, I pray that it amazes you, challenges you, grows you and changes you.

A danger in reading a Gospel for many of you is that perhaps you have read one or all of the Gospels and wonder what you can still learn. I encourage you to approach Mark with an open heart and mind. *"The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* Hebrews 4:12 Wow, if that is true, this book is not simply words, but it is power! Look deeper. Ask your heart deeper questions. As you go through this study, try to both get a bigger picture as well as see in-between the lines. Mark introduces us to the person of Jesus and His message. What greater knowledge could there be and it is worth putting your whole life into studying.

Here are couple of study suggestions. If you are leading a group, ask the members to do the following:

- First, get a notebook or journal and prepare a section for your personal notes on the study.
- Second, read the Gospel through in one sitting. Take 2 hours on a Sunday afternoon and get your favorite coffee drink. Write down your own observations. What stands out to you? What do you learn about Jesus? What He says and what He does and how He does them? What surprises you? What makes you ask questions? What makes you uncomfortable?
- Then, go through each section of this study. Read the material. Ask yourself the questions and write your answers down. Try and get the smaller details of each section but also keep in mind the comments and highlights on the big picture. Try and think big picture- smaller details- and bigger picture as you go through the book.
- Write down a broad outline as you go through. Try and see Mark's overall big picture themes. Pick out a couple verses to memorize that summarize what Marks is trying to tell us about Jesus.
- Finally, Mark's gospel is about the life of Jesus. Get to know the person of Jesus through this study. Constantly ask what you are seeing about Him, His life, His character, His purpose and How he lives all those out.

Each section of this study includes three major parts. They start with a **“HOOK”**. The hook is meant to grab the participants’ attention. It may be several questions, a statement of context, a scenario or perhaps a story. **Important Note:** Under each Hook, I suggest reading the passage out loud and then simply asking the questions, **“According to this section, Who is Jesus and What did he come to do?”** These are simple questions but they are profound in observing what the text reveals about the character and mission of Jesus. This study (and Mark’s Gospel) is designed to introduce us to Jesus and why He came. Don’t overlook this and move on to the smaller nuances of the passages. There is no greater message in this book than the answers to these two questions.

Second, the **“LOOK”** section is the most significant portion of material and designed to engage with the passage of that study. I have spent hours and hours studying Mark’s Gospel using several commentaries and other studies. (Those resources are highlighted below). Use the work I have done in putting this together to help create more awareness of some of the themes and intentions to which Mark points. There are many questions written for each section. The Leader’s Guide in particular (LG) offers more commentary, illustrations and creative ideas to help you as an individual or group process on a deeper level.

A cursory reading of Mark will leave many stones unturned and even potential errors in how we see Jesus. So look deeper, read thoughtfully and examine the hard teaching. The goal of the Look section is not just to process information, but move that information to heart action. In leading a group, try and make this study your own. But at the same time, it has been laid out intentionally to communicate the heart of what Mark tries to get across so bear in mind that the information is chosen with a goal in mind.

Often I will include a line or two at the end of the study for personal reflection. I will call this section **“Notebooks”**. In the notebook that they have purchased, give several minutes to respond to the questions. Then, as your group grows in vulnerability, ask them to share some of what they wrote.

Watch: I include 5 short sections from the History Channel’s “The Bible” series. While sometimes I do not think it helpful to watch Hollywood’s interpretation of Biblical scenes, I have found this series to be very illuminating. You can preview the sessions and see if they reflect where you are at in the study. Choose if you want to use them or not. I think they could add some context to help your small group “feel” what is happening in the Biblical narrative and make it come alive.

Finally, each study finishes with a **“TOOK”** section. If we don’t apply what we see in the Bible, studying the Bible is useless. Each section ends with the questions:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

I encourage you to leave time at the end for these questions. Have group members write their answers down. Help them remember their answers by saying them out loud. Ask each other to pray for the others that week along the lines of the answers to these questions.

Introduction to Mark from the NIV Study Bible

Authorship

Although there is no direct internal evidence of authorship, it was the unanimous testimony of the early church that this Gospel was written by John Mark (“John, also called Mark,” [Ac 12:12,25](#); [15:37](#)). The most important evidence comes from Papias (c. A.D. 140), who quotes an even earlier source as saying: (1) Mark was a close associate of Peter, from whom he received the tradition of the things said and done by the Lord; (2) this tradition did not come to Mark as a finished, sequential account of the life of our Lord, but as the preaching of Peter—preaching directed to the needs of the early Christian communities; (3) Mark accurately preserved this material. The conclusion drawn from this tradition is that the Gospel of Mark largely consists of the preaching of Peter arranged and shaped by Mark (see note on [Ac 10:37](#)).

John Mark in the NT

It is generally agreed that the Mark who is associated with Peter in the early non-Biblical tradition is also the John Mark of the NT. The first mention of him is in connection with his mother, Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem that served as a meeting place for believers ([Ac 12:12](#)). When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from Jerusalem after the famine visit, Mark accompanied them ([Ac 12:25](#)). Mark next appears as a “helper” to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey ([Ac 13:5](#)), but he deserted them at Perga in Pamphylia to return to Jerusalem ([Ac 13:13](#)). Paul must have been deeply disappointed with Mark’s actions on this occasion, because when Barnabas proposed taking Mark on the second journey, Paul flatly refused, a refusal that broke up their working relationship ([Ac 15:36–39](#)). Barnabas took Mark, who was his cousin ([Col 4:10](#)), and departed for Cyprus. No further mention is made of either of them in the book of Acts. Mark reappears in Paul’s letter to the Colossians written from Rome. Paul sends a greeting from Mark and adds: “You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him” ([Col 4:10](#); see [Phm 24](#), written about the same time). At this point Mark was apparently beginning to win his way back into Paul’s confidence. By the end of Paul’s life, Mark had fully regained Paul’s favor (see [2Ti 4:11](#) and note).

Date of Composition

Some, who hold that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a major source, have suggested that Mark may have been composed in the 50s or early 60s. Others have felt that the content of the Gospel and statements made about Mark by the early church fathers indicate that the book was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Place of Origin

According to early church tradition, Mark was written “in the regions of Italy” (Anti-Marcionite Prologue) or, more specifically, in Rome (Irenaeus; Clement of Alexandria). These same authors closely associate Mark’s writing of the Gospel with the apostle Peter. The above evidence is consistent with (1) the historical probability that Peter was in Rome during the last days of his life and was martyred there, and (2) the Biblical evidence that Mark also was in Rome about the same time and was closely associated with Peter (see [2Ti 4:11](#); [1Pe 5:13](#), where the word “Babylon” may be a cryptogram for Rome; see also Introduction to [1 Peter](#): Place of Writing).

Recipients

The evidence points to the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs ([7:2–4](#); [15:42](#)), translates Aramaic words ([3:17](#); [5:41](#); [7:11,34](#); [15:22,34](#)) and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom ([8:34–38](#); [13:9–13](#))—subjects of special concern to Roman believers (and to Peter as well; cf. [1 Peter](#)). A Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid dissemination.

Occasion and Purpose

Since Mark’s Gospel is traditionally associated with Rome, it may have been occasioned by the persecutions of the Roman church in the period c. A.D. 64–67. The famous fire of Rome in 64—probably set by Nero himself but blamed on Christians—resulted in widespread persecution. Even martyrdom was not unknown among Roman believers. Mark may be writing to prepare his readers for such suffering by placing before them the life of our Lord. There are many references, both explicit and veiled, to suffering and discipleship throughout his Gospel (see [1:12–13](#); [3:22,30](#); [8:34–38](#); [10:30,33–34,45](#); [13:8–13](#)).

Themes

1. *The cross.* Both the human cause ([12:12](#); [14:1–2](#); [15:10](#)) and the divine necessity ([8:31](#); [9:31](#); [10:33–34](#)) of the cross are emphasized by Mark.
2. *Discipleship.* Special attention should be paid to the passages on discipleship that arise from Jesus' predictions of his passion ([8:34–9:1](#); [9:35–10:31](#); [10:42–45](#)).
3. *The teachings of Jesus.* Although Mark records far fewer actual teachings of Jesus than the other Gospel writers, there is a remarkable emphasis on Jesus as teacher. The words “teacher,” “teach” or “teaching,” and “Rabbi” are applied to Jesus in Mark 39 times.
4. *The Messianic secret.* On several occasions Jesus warns his disciples or others to keep silent about who he is or what he has done (see [1:34,44](#) and notes; [3:12](#); [5:43](#); [7:36](#); [8:30](#); [9:9](#)).
5. *Son of God.* Although Mark emphasizes the humanity of Jesus (see [3:5](#); [6:6,31,34](#); [7:34](#); [8:12](#); [10:14](#); [11:12](#)), he does not neglect his deity (see [1:1,11](#); [3:11](#); [5:7](#); [9:7](#); [12:1–11](#); [13:32](#); [15:39](#)).

Special Characteristics

Mark's Gospel is a simple, succinct, unadorned, yet vivid account of Jesus' ministry, emphasizing more what Jesus did than what he said. Mark moves quickly from one episode in Jesus' life and ministry to another, often using the adverb “immediately” (see note on [1:12](#)). The book as a whole is characterized as “The beginning of the gospel” ([1:1](#)). The life, death and resurrection of Christ comprise the “beginning,” of which the apostolic preaching in Acts is the continuation.

For writing this study, I am relying heavily on several sources:

- 1.) [The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 8](#) on Mark, Walter W. Wessel Zondervan 1984
- 2.) [Gospel of Mark Study](#) by Tim Keller © Timothy J. Keller, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church 2005
- 3.) [Mark, The Gospel of Passion](#) by Michael Card IVP 2012
- 4.) [An Introduction to New Testament](#) by D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo Zondervan 2005
- 5.) [Encountering the New Testament](#) by Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough Baker 2005

*Unless noted, all commentary/context has been written by Miles O'Neil

Part I – The King and His Kingdom

[Emphasis on WHO Jesus is and WHAT is His kingdom]

Section I. Ministry in Galilee Begins 1:1 – 6:5

Lesson 1 – The Return of the King

[Chapter 1:1–15]

HOOK:

Ask:

- What do you know about Mark’s Gospel?
- Does anyone know any themes of Mark?
- Does anyone know why Mark wrote this Gospel in particular- who was it to, what were the circumstances, why did he feel the need to write?
- Given that he was writing to a group of Christians who were facing persecution for what and who they believed, what would you expect Mark to write to them?

Refer to the intro material for answers. You may want to simply read some of the intro material.

Read the section: What do you notice about Jesus and what He came to do?

There are a lot of things that could come out already. Take the observances of the group and at an appropriate time move on towards “LOOK”.

LOOK:

A New Genre Vs. 1-3

Notebooks: Open your notebook and write down phrases, sentences, verses, references to the question, “What is the Gospel”? Keep that page ear marked. Keep your ears attuned to that question as the study goes on. At the end, I will ask you to take a new page and write out all that the Gospel is. It will be interesting to compare what you wrote now and at the end of Mark.

1. WHERE and or HOW is the word “gospel” used in other places in the Bible?

1 Corinthians 15:1-10, Colossians 1:23, Romans 16:25, Revelation 14:6

*Look at Romans 1:16-17. What is “the gospel” according to these two verses?

Commentary: *In 1:17 it is both the righteousness OF God and the righteousness FROM God that define the Gospel. Paul knows that God is Righteousness. This is the glorious perfection of a holy God. Yet, if God is righteous, there is an inherent problem for humanity. We certainly are not righteous and so a necessary problem exists. We are removed and separated from a holy, perfect-righteous God. So, the righteousness OF God condemns us. Martin Luther the great reformer read this verse and it sent him into depression. He understood that if God is righteous, then he stands condemned.*

But Paul also knew that there was a righteousness FROM God available through His Son Jesus. Martin Luther likewise came to terms with this and it was Romans 1:17 which at once sent him to despair and then at the same time "set him free". He said, "You mean, here Paul is not talking about the righteousness by which God Himself is righteous, but a righteousness that God gives freely by His grace to people who don't have righteousness of their own." And so Luther said, "Whoa, you mean the righteousness by which I will be saved, is not mine?" Finally, "When I discovered that, I was born again of the Holy Ghost. And the doors of paradise swung open, and I walked through."

2. How does Mark use "gospel" in this setting? Is it the same or different than Romans 1?

Here Mark is using "gospel" in a different sense than Paul has used it. Read the intro to this study for a more thorough explanation. In short, he is introducing us not just to an explanation of the Gospel, but he is introducing us to a new genre of literature, gospel narrative. It is the story of the revelation of the person of Jesus on who's shoulders the "Gospel" rests.

3. Why does Mark use the connection to Isaiah to start his "Gospel"?

Commentary: *Mark does not start with an introduction to Jesus or Jesus' voice but the words of prophets of the Old Testament. Malachi was the last voice before the New Testament. Mark quotes his prediction of the ministry of John the Baptist. "I send a messenger before your face who will prepare your way". (Vs. 2) Then Mark quotes Isaiah telling again of John's ministry. "(John will) prepare the way of the Lord". (Vs. 3) Here Mark ends the silence of the "intertestamental period" (400 years since Malachi has spoken). He presents John the Baptist as the man who stands with one foot firmly rooted in the Old Testament and the other planted in the Jordan River. John proclaimed a message of "repentance". We are condemned as unrighteous and owe God a penalty. We are not able to get to God on our own but only through turning to God and apologizing. We must have a mediator. Then in verse 7...here He comes....the person of Jesus Christ, the true prophet, God in the flesh! The Lord has come! Here is the King! The return of the king!*

4. What were the Jews thinking when they heard of the "Lord", the King coming? Speculate... what will Mark tell us about this Lord?

Commentary: *Here in Mark and most common in the New Testament, "Lord" is translated from Greek "kyrios". In Hebrew however, the word Lord is translated "mashiach" (messiah). Hence, when Mark uses the reference to Isaiah, he is making the provocative statement that Jesus is the expected Messiah. What were the expectations for such a Messiah? They expected "the lion of Judah". He would come with a roar and liberate the Hebrew nation from captivity. Most certainly they would be set free from the rule of Rome, often referred to as Babylon (Israel's captors in the OT). They were expecting great political and economic victory.*

So when Jesus comes, they are looking for someone much different. Jesus does not follow the norms of expectation. In fact he flies in the face of those norms. Mark then most certainly will try and help to shift the view of what the true messiah says, does and is. He will fight a battle against the ruling elite that want to maintain a view that gives Israel great advantage on the exterior, rather than peace with God on the interior.

Commentary on the meaning of Messiah:

The word "messiah" comes from the Greek messias (cp. Jn 1:41; 4:25), which is itself a transliteration of the Hebrew mashiach (2Sm 22:51; 23:1), meaning one who is "smeared" or "anointed" (with oil). The Greek equivalent is christos (cp. LXX 2Sm 22:51; 23:1), which occurs some 500 times in the New Testament. The nominal form of christosis derived from the verbs mashach (Hebrew) and chriem (Greek), which means "to anoint" or "to smear (with oil)."

Messianic Expectations:

"Messianism" and "messianic expectation" are ways of describing the expectation that an anointed person will come to redeem Israel and/or the Church. Christians believe that Messiah has already come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The appearance of Messiah is understood to be part of a larger eschatological drama whereby human activity on earth is appreciably altered by the in-breaking of the "kingdom of God," a time when God's will on earth is more tangibly and permanently experienced. It is usually believed that this anointed figure is part of the climax of human history.

The Origin of Messianic Expectation:

The messianic expectations in the Jewish and Christian faiths are traced back to God's covenant with King David (2Sm 7) and the aftermath of exile and cessation of the Davidic dynasty. Hope arose that God would someday restore a godly king to Israel. Some of Israel's prophets foretold the coming of a regal Davidic descendant, and their descriptions seem to portray him as far more than a mere mortal. Isaiah foretold the coming of a "child" and "son" who "will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace," and whose kingdom will never end (Is 9:6-7). Again Isaiah prophesied the coming of a Branch of David, on whom the Spirit of God will rest, who will rule the earth with justice and equity (Is 11:1-5). Descriptions such as these hinted that the coming anointed one, the Messiah, would be God Himself.

In the intertestament period (ca 400 b.c. to the birth of Christ) several passages of Old Testament Scripture are interpreted in the light of the messianic hope. Besides Isaiah 11:1-5, Genesis 49:10 ("The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet.") and Numbers 24:17 ("A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel") are often appealed to. First-century philosopher Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, historian and survivor of the great rebellion (a.d. 66-70), both allude to these passages as pertaining to Messiah. Isaiah 11 is of special interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 1QSb 5 applies portions of Isaiah 11:2-5 to the awaited Messiah, while 4Q161, a major commentary on the book of Isaiah, interprets Isaiah 10:34-11:5 as a prophecy of the coming Messiah, called the "Branch of David," who will destroy Israel's enemies, the Romans (called the "Kittim"). 4Q285 quotes Isaiah 10:34-11:1 and interprets it as a reference to the coming Messiah, called the "Branch of David" and "leader of the community" (that is, the leader of the Qumran community). It is said that he will put to death the "king of the Kittim," or the Roman emperor (see also the parallel 11Q14). Craig Evans Acadia Divinity School Nova Scotia

5. Perhaps it easy for us to see how they had it wrong. However, try and put the expectations into modern vernacular. When have your expectations clouded your vision of the reality of who God truly is vs. your pre-conceived notions?

- Who do you expect Jesus to be?
- How do you expect Him to act?
- How does He act differently than you expect?

Time to Get Wet Vs. 4-8

Context: We need an accurate picture of the countryside. The province of Galilee is roughly 50 miles long by 25 miles wide. On its eastern border is the freshwater Lake of Galilee, about 14 miles long and 7 miles wide. Wherever you stand you can see the entire sweep of the lake. This explains how the crowds could follow Jesus around the shore while he crossed the lake in a boat. Standing on the shore of that lake, which is surrounded by modest hills, you get the distinct impression this is the only world that exists. I think of Galilee as a self-contained world. In Jesus' day Galilee was the most densely populated province in the Middle East. Josephus, who had once been governor estimated the population at fifteen thousand. This helps us understand how a massive mob could come together to follow Jesus and why it was sometimes difficult for him to get away from the crowd. Mark, the Gospel of Passion Michael Card pg. 34

1. Who was John? Look at context, what does it say about Him? What does it say that he pointed to Jesus and not himself?

Don't overlook John's presence. As I wrote above, here is a prophet, one foot firmly in the OT and one in the NT. He is mentioned in each one of the Gospels. He is mentioned in the ancient writings of the great historian Josephus. He will become a focus of Herod Antipas and indeed takes a lengthy place in Mark's gospel. After 400 years of silence in the Bible since Malachi, John arrives preparing the way of the Lord. People from all over the region flocked to him to hear his teaching and be baptized. He had room for pride and arrogance but notice his receiving of Jesus.

2. How did John prepare the way?

Context: A major part of Jewish worship and ceremony was the various ablutions and washings that had to occur constantly. They represented the need for being holy and cleansed from sin in order to stand before a holy God. Ordinarily, this meant washing one's hands before going in to the temple, and so on. Only Gentile converts who wanted to be part of Israel's worship had to be baptized thoroughly (by effusion or immersion) as part of the ceremonial rites that made one "clean" and fit for the presence of God. Jews were never baptized because they were already considered "clean." But John's ministry was very startling. It called every one to be baptized. It signified, first, that your pedigree and moral record did not matter. Everyone was going to have to be saved by grace to enter this kingdom. Secondly, it signaled the need for complete newness — a new people of God would need to be formed, and a new covenant with God would have to be made. No wonder John's ministry caused such a stir! His ministry of baptism was so unique that he could be called "the Baptist" — because no one else had ever done such a thing! He was declaring (what the prophets had said), that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were only pointers to something else — that no one was "fit" for the kingdom except through grace, that a radical salvation was needed. Tim Keller, Study on Mark pg. 2

Dad Approves Vs. 9-11

1. Why is Jesus' father's approval significant especially since Jesus has not yet started ministry?

This is huge. It has in mind Psalm 2:3- "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you." The Father does not love and approve of his Son because of what the Son had done. He hadn't done anything yet. There was no earning of the Father's favor. He had not worked for the Father's approval. The Father showed his Son his love simply because he loved him. Therein is the model for how the Son feels about you and I. He approves of us not because of what we have done, are doing or will do. He loves us because he chooses to love us. When we follow the admonition of John and Baptist, repent and turn away from our selves and towards Jesus asking for forgiveness, he gives us his approval, which can never be taken away.

2. "Immediately" -Mark uses this word 42x. Why? What could he be pointing towards? What hints does it give us to Mark's purpose? What does it hint about Jesus' purpose?

He uses it to show that Jesus is a man on task. Jesus moves quickly and decisively. Chapter 15 is what he is immediately moving towards. He is going quickly to His death. Aren't most of us trying to avoid death? Jesus is trying to gain death!

"Immediately" is also a decisive word. Jesus calls us to a decisive action. He calls for a decision. As you read Mark's gospel, what will you decide about Jesus? Will you respond to what He is calling? This is not just a question for the non-believers in the group. This is for us all. What will teach? Who

will we heal? How will we do them? These are the themes of Mark's gospel and we are simultaneously asked them as questions.

The Suffering Servant Vs. 12-13

1. Notice the 2nd use of "Immediately" right after vs. 11... What is happening?

After being strengthened by the voice of the Father, he is sent out as the "Suffering Servant". The King introduced by Mark and Isaiah, confirmed by the Father, now sent to suffer with Satan. The irony is thick. Here we have a model of Jesus' life and ministry. He will teach, he will heal... but HOW he teaches and heals will be the true mark of his character... He will do them as a suffering, humble, servant.

Commentary: Note that the Spirit sends him into the desert "with the wild animals". For Mark's readers wild animals also awaited in Rome. The prospect of real persecution loomed before them. To endure they and also we need the same thing as Jesus, the voice of the Father saying, "You are my son"!

The Kingdom of God Vs. 14-15

1. Mark has introduced us to this new literary form called "gospel". What is the Gospel to Mark? We must pay close attention to Mark and look for the answer to that question as we go on. But he gives us a profound clue here as he gives us Jesus' first words recorded by Mark. Say what Jesus says in your own words.

Here are some statements about vs. 14-15

- The Kingdom of God (KOG) has come! Repent and believe this message AND this messenger.
- The Gospel is not just a philosophy or teaching, it is a person, here he is, Jesus!
- This could be called "The great proclamation". We know the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20, but here is the great proclamation! These are Jesus' first words in the "Gospel".
- "Time" = "kairos" (greek). Kairos does not simply mean "time" but God's time. It is God's action not simply "time". Simple "time" is "chronos" (greek). Jesus is saying- The great stage is set. Time is ripe for God's power. The Kingdom of God is at bay. Here comes the teaching of the Kingdom.

2. What is the "Kingdom of God"?

Commentary: The KOG is at once both past, present and future. It has always been, it always will be, but it is seen in different measures. Here Jesus is saying the manifestation of His kingdom is being introduced- or more accurately- reintroduced. For the manifestation of His kingdom has been tainted by Adam, Eve and the rest of us in their lineage. He is now ushering in the advancement of the manifestation of His Kingdom and it is moving towards "the End".

The KOG is the "reign" of God. Furthermore, there is no other appropriate action than to "repent and believe". If Jesus really speaks, God in living form, then there truly is no other response. Mark is urgent in showing this message to be true as he draws quickly to the triumphal events of Jesus' death and resurrection and finally, the End. Wow!

Commentary: This section has been summarized from *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, (Zondervan, pp. 131-134).

In understanding Jesus' teaching and ministry, it is important to understand the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus. The Jews of Jesus' day thought they were on the very brink of time, when God would step into history and bring an end to this age and usher in the age to come. The Greek word for the end they were looking for is 'eschaton.' Thus to be eschatological in one's thinking meant to be

looking for the end. The earliest Christians well understood this eschatological way of looking at life. For them, the events of Jesus' coming, his death and resurrection, and the giving of the Spirit were all related in their expectations about the 'coming of the end.'

The coming of the end also meant a new beginning — the beginning of God's new age — the messianic age. The new age was also referred to as the kingdom of God, which meant "the time of God's rule." This new age would be a time of righteousness (Isaiah 11:4-5), and people would live in peace (Isaiah 2:2-4). It would be a time of the fullness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-30) when the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah would be realized (Jeremiah 31: 31-34, 32:38- 40). Sin and sickness would be done away with (Zechariah 13:1). Even the material creation would feel the joyful effects of this new age (Isaiah 11:6-9).

Jesus came and announced that the coming kingdom was at hand with his ministry (Mark 1:14-15). He cast out demons, worked miracles, and freely accepted the outcasts and sinners — all signs that the end had begun (Luke 11:20; Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 14:21; 15:1-2). Everyone kept watching him to see if he really was the coming one. Would he really bring in the messianic age with all of its' splendor? Then suddenly he was crucified — and the lights went out.

But no! There was a glorious sequel. On the third day he was raised from the dead and he appeared to many of his followers. Surely now he would "restore the kingdom of Israel" (Acts 1:6). But instead he returned to the Father and poured out the promised Spirit. Very early, beginning with Peter's sermon in Acts 3, the early Christians came to realize that Jesus had not come to usher in the final end, but the "beginning" of the end, as it were. Thus they came to see that with Jesus' death and resurrection, and with the coming of the Spirit, the blessings and benefits of the future had already come. In a sense, therefore, the end had already come. But in another sense, the end had not yet come. Thus it was "already," but "not yet."

The early believers, therefore, learned to be truly eschatological people. They lived between the times — that is, between the beginning of the end and the consummation of the end. Because the kingdom, the time of God's rule, has been inaugurated with Jesus' own coming, we are called to life in the kingdom, which means life under his lordship, freely accepted and forgiven. But also committed to Jesus' Kingdom priorities of the new age and to seeing them worked out in our own lives and the world in this present age. Tim Keller Study on Mark- pg. 6

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 2– The Pattern of the Kingdom

[Chapter 1:16–45]

HOOK:

Watch #1: <http://www.history.com/shows/the-bible/videos/the-bible-recap-hour-6>

Ask:

- If Jesus had not come and He came today.... How would you expect Him to come? Circumstances, place, how would He display Himself?
- Christianity is not viewed highly in our current culture. Given the current environment, what would you expect Him to do and say if He would come today?

Remember this question: How does the pattern of the Kingdom differ radically from the expectation?

Read the Section: Ask, Who is Jesus and Why did He come?

LOOK:

Band of Brothers Vs. 16-20

1. What does Jesus show us about the KOG in the calling of these men? Answer the questions below.

- How does Jesus call?

“Come follow me” (vs. 1:17) is not an offer nor an invitation. It is a command that can either be obeyed or rejected. They can respond or ignore it. The phrase “fisher’s of men” comes from the OT. It is not a trite, cute saying. It is a call to be a part of the serious business of the gospel. Over time, they will begin to understand how serious the call is.

- Who does He call into service?

It can’t be missed that He calls fishermen! Come on Jesus... If you are going to give your ministry away to men, choose some eloquent, important leaders, not fishermen! Follow up question: Why? Speculate as to why Jesus chose these men?

- What does Jesus ask as he calls? What does this imply about living in the KOG?

Notice 2 major things He asks of them-

- *First, fishing was their livelihood. They had families to provide for most likely. Jesus tells them to leave their foundational security, their economic security and trust and follow Him.*
- *Second, He tells them to leave their family behind. It says they left their father Zebedee and we hear of him no longer in this book.*

The implication is that we are to place all things under God’s control in the KOG.

What is this Kingdom and who is this King? Vs. 21-45

1. What are the first actions of the Kingdom? Vs. 21-18

- Teaching
- Healing
- Authority

He goes into the synagogue and teaches, with authority, and then heals a demon possessed man. You must notice this pattern in Jesus' ministry as we move on. He doesn't just heal... He teaches truth along side. And He doesn't just heal and teach, but He does them to for a purpose, to show His authority.

Commentary: For the first time, Mark explicitly uses the term "authority" (v. 22), which literally means "out of the original stuff." When Mark says that he taught them "as one who had authority," he means Jesus taught about life with original rather than derived authority. Though this text does not give us an actual sample of his teaching, later we see some examples of this assumption of "original" authority.

For example, the teachers and even the prophets would begin their teaching with, "Thus saith the Lord," but Jesus would say, "but I say unto you." This is something neither the teachers of the law nor even the Old Testament prophets ever had the audacity to do. Another unique characteristic of Jesus' teaching was how he often began a statement by saying "Amen, amen" (translated in the King James as "Verily, verily" and in modern translations as "Truly, I say to you") to introduce his teaching. (The first instance of this is in Mark 3:28, but it occurs repeatedly.) This term was pronounced by elders of the synagogue after a teaching as a way of approving and validating what the speaker had just said. The term means "yes, this statement squares with the Scripture and the traditions;" it is always used to affirm the teaching of someone else. Jesus, however, begins his statements with this formula and bestows it on himself. He is saying, "I take away your right to judge my teaching. No one has the authority to reject any part of my teaching nor is there any standard for evaluation of teaching any higher than me myself." As one commentator said, Jesus' use of this phrase was without analogy or precedence in history. No prophet, priest, elder, teacher of the law, or king had ever assumed to speak like this. Jesus was so much more authoritative in his teaching than any one else had ever been that it left his hearers dumbfounded. Tim Keller, *Gospel of Mark Study pg. 13*

Ask:

- As you look at each of the 5 sections in this passage, what category above (teaching, healing, authority) would you put each of the following stories under?

-Unclean Spirit 23-28

1. Jesus performs a miracle that heals, but what is the main point?

It shows the authority of Jesus. This is no normal man. This is no simple miracle worker using some magic force.

2. Given what the watchers (and listeners to Mark) were expecting, why does Jesus/Mark point towards his Authority as the emphasis rather than the exorcism?

They were expecting a miracle worker. They were expecting someone to liberate them from political and social bondage. But that is not why Jesus does miracles, ie. to show his power nor to meet their expectations. He heals to show that He has authority. He is the King. All realms of reality are under His control.

3. Given the current culture's emphasis on naturalism, what does this story say to the modern listener?

The Spiritual world is real! There is a Spiritual reality ever bit as real as the natural reality. The real problem with the world is a spiritual problem. The Natural problems are just manifestations of a deeper issue.

Commentary: *Here we see Jesus exhibiting power over demons through the exorcism of a demon-possessed man. This moves us beyond what we have already seen.*

First, this is not simply a claim of authority (which we have in the calling of the disciples and the authoritative teaching), but is also a clear proof and exercise of Jesus' authority. He shows he has real power over supernatural evil. Second, this is an exhibition of power and authority beyond anything that any spiritual leader has ever demonstrated. Go through all of the Old Testament and there is no record of any prophet or priest casting out an evil spirit. Not only that, there is no incantation or ritual, no hocus pocus, as was always done by the exorcists of the time. Jesus does it merely with a couple of blunt words — "Shut up and get out!" And it was over. What an amazing show of power! We could almost say that Jesus "didn't even break a sweat." Notice that when Jesus heals he does not do an incantation and call on a "higher power." He is the higher power!

Our contemporary culture is still rather skeptical of the existence of demons. If a person is an atheist, it is consistent to then deny the existence of evil spirits. But it is not consistent to believe in God and in a good personal supernatural being and then refuse to believe that there are evil personal supernatural beings. But if we posit the existence of demonic forces, it does shed light on several things we know about the world and life. 1) First, demonic forces explain the complexity and intransigence of psychological problems. The older "physicians of the soul" understood that depression, fear, anger, or inner numbness may be so profound and difficult to deal with because of the multiplicity and inter-relatedness of the many different roots and causes. There are possible physiological, psychological, moral, and demonic sources for our problems. In the Bible, demons can accuse and tempt and stir up and aggravate all the other factors, making our emotional dungeons very deep and double locked. 2) Second, demonic forces can explain systemic social evil. Evil unjust social systems can reign in a culture and have enormously evil and devastating effects, yet no single individual member of the oppressive system seems to be "all that bad." Think of the average white person in apartheid kinds of societies. Very, very few are actively full of hate or are personally wicked individuals, and yet they participate in a system that is much more wicked as a whole than the sum of its parts. In Rwanda, many Christians got sucked up into genocidal rage in which whole tribes massacred other whole tribes. How do we explain this? There are indications in the Scripture that demons can stand behind human institutions such as governments or nations and can produce evil effects through those systems and institutions.

In summary, it is not possible to explain all the misery and evil in the world as simply the product of individual sinful choices. Evil spirits greatly magnify, aggravate, and complicate the sin in our hearts that we commit toward God, one another, and against our own selves. People get sucked into deep psychological and social abysses of wickedness and brokenness that the Bible says are the result of demonic activity. But Jesus shows his authority can heal the darkest troubles in the deepest recesses of the human soul — individually and corporately. He can handle the forces that enslave us. This enables us to see in Jesus' ministry of exorcism, a paradigm for how the kingdom works. Here we begin to see of how Jesus' kingdom is more than simply my individual obedience to his will. Jesus comes into my life not simply as a rule-giver, but also as a liberator and a healer. He doesn't bring simply rules, but a new "realm" of his kingly, healing power. Why?

For the first time, we come to see that the alternative to having Jesus as a master is to have some other false and enslaving power as a master. Not everyone is personally possessed by a demon like this man (v. 23-24) who has lost complete psychological control of himself. But Paul speaks in Ephesians 6 and elsewhere that in another sense we are fighting demonic "principalities" all the time. Anything we make into an ultimate value (for example, like our career) becomes a "master" and begins to exercise enslaving power over us. In the case of career-idolatry, it begins to drive us to over work, deceives our minds into denying how much we are working, begins to erode the strength of our family, etc. When Jesus comes into our lives, and becomes the supreme Lord, his kingdom begins to

heal us of the denial, begins to heal our family life, begins to liberate us from the anxiety we feel over money and work. He becomes the ultimate Savior and therefore the ultimate Lord (King). The more the gospel of sheer grace dominates our thinking, the more his kingdom spreads through my life and liberates me from the power of false masters and saviors. This is the work of the “gospel of the kingdom.” As I submit to his Lordship, he surrounds me and brings me into his kingdom, and I become new. Mark Study- pg. 15 Copyright © Timothy J. Keller, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church 2005

-Simon’s mother-in-law vs. 29-31

1. Personalize this healing. (Have you experienced someone being seriously ill? What were the circumstances?) Knowing what we later learn of Jesus’ compassion, what was He feeling here? Why is that significant? What does it say about Jesus?

We begin here to see Jesus’ compassion. Imagine your friend’s mother laying ill, dying of a fever. (You have to realize here that “fever” is not insignificant in those days as it is to us. This woman is most likely on the edge of death.) Jesus reaches out to her. He does not just say, “You are healed!” with great pomp and glory. He takes her by the hand and raises her up. Do not miss the compassionate humanity of Jesus in Mark’s gospel.

-Healing of many vs. 32-34

1. Why not let the demons speak?

Speaking one’s name was seen in this day and age as having power over someone. The spiritual world has no power over Jesus, but Jesus over the spiritual world.

-Jesus preaches in Galilee vs. 35-39

1. Speculate together: Is it odd to you that though Mark has now told us several times that Jesus was teaching... here we see that Jesus tells us he came to preach... and yet we have no accounts of what Jesus taught? What do you make of this?

In fact Mark records the least of Jesus’ words compared to every other Gospel. Mark is more concerned with showing the reaction of the crowd and moving the story “Immediately” to its conclusion. The reaction of the crowd shows us that they were not interested in His words, only His miracles. 2000 years later and we still have the same response to Jesus do we not?

-Healing of a Leper vs. 40-45

1. Why does it record Jesus’ touching of the leper? Why not just speak it?

Jesus touch shows His compassion for the healing of the emotional, not just physical. Imagine the life of a leper. Covered with festering sores, he was outcast by all. He was cut off from worshipping God in the synagogue. No one would even come near for if a person was even to accidentally touch a leper, they would be seen as unclean. Jesus was “Moved with Pity (compassion NIV)” literally means “his guts were wrenched out” for this man. For the first time in history, the exchange was reversed. Jesus touched this man and the cleanness of Jesus went into the man. Imagine feeling the touch of Jesus, the first touch of any human since being ill. Yes, he could have spoken healing, but Jesus touched the man!

2. Speculate: why does Jesus command him to say nothing?

Remember, culturally, what were the people expecting from a messiah? As Jesus was revealing His true self, contrary to the preconceived ideas, what would be the danger in those that had been healed sharing who this Jesus is?

They were not informed enough of the counter-cultural reality of Jesus. He must make it clear to people that they must turn to Him and repent rather than follow a circus side-show of a magician. His Messianic role was so radically different that He must be the one to proclaim his identity to the Hebrew people.

Teaching, Healing, Authority

Concluding questions:

- Which of these three above, Teaching, Healing, Authority- do you most gravitate towards when you think of God's kingdom coming?
- I think most of us prefer Jesus' display of physical "healing"? How do you respond the Mark's emphasis of Jesus' complementary teaching and authority?
- What would you say to our current culture that rejects authority?
- How do you respond to God's authority personally?
- Jesus' model is one of teaching AND healing AND authority. Mark nearly always shows Jesus doing all of them. It is like walking a tightrope. Falling too heavily on any one of the three can lead to falling off the right path. On which side do you error? What are the implications for your communication/living out of the KOG?

*What does C.S. Lewis mean as he speaks of the cultures love of "democracy [freedom]" and disdain of "obedience [authority]"?

Commentary: (C.S. Lewis)- I [believe in democracy/freedom] because I believe in the Fall... A great deal of enthusiasm for democracy [freedom] descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau, who believed in democracy because they thought humankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government. The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they're not true (Humanity being so wise and good). And whenever their weakness is exposed, the people who prefer tyranny make capital out of the exposure... The real reason for democracy is the reverse. We are so fallen that no person can be trusted with unchecked power over others. Aristotle said that some people were fit to be slaves... But I reject slavery because I see none fit to be masters...

But [democracy/freedom] is medicine, not food... The mind that hates all superiority is stunted... The man who cannot conceive of a joyful and loyal obedience on the one hand, nor an unembarrassed and noble acceptance of that obedience on the other, the man who has never even wanted to kneel or bow, is a prosaic barbarian. It would be wicked folly to restore these old inequalities on the legal or external plane. Their proper place is elsewhere... Where we are forbidden to honor a king we honor billionaires, athletes, or film-stars instead. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served. Deny it food and it will gobble poison. Human nature will not permanently endure flat equality [freedom] if it is extended from its proper political field into the real, concrete fields within. Let us wear equality [freedom], but let us undress every night [before God]. — C.S. Lewis, "Equality"

Notebooks: After this 2nd section, what is the Kingdom of God according to Mark so far?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 3– The Message of the Kingdom

[Chapter 2: 1–3:6]

HOOK:

Context: 2:1-3:6 forms a separate section: There are five conflicts with the Jewish authorities. Things are moving “immediately” along and one of the important themes that Mark reveals is how there is growing hostility from the religious leaders. The Jewish Rabbis’ teachings added 248 rules and 345 prohibitions to the Jewish law. However the Pharisees added another 1500 “hedge” laws that kept one from breaking the law. It is to these laws that Jesus often came into conflict. Here we encounter 5 of these conflicts and learn about how Jesus taught to view the law now that He had come to fulfill the law.

Read the Section: Who is Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- What are the contradictions in this section to a modern view of Jesus?
- Mark is going to point out to us that Jesus is the “suffering servant king”.... What are the apparent contradictions in those three words?

- Generally, what makes you feel safe (or unsafe) in life? Safety from physical danger? Safety from social pressure? Safety for your spiritual life?
- Speculate: What made the religious people of Jesus’ time feel safe in their social/spiritual lives?
- Put yourselves back in this day and age. What are the rules that you follow that make you feel safe?

Commentary: Jesus was dangerous to the Jewish way of life. Jesus was dangerous to a feeling of safety for the religious person. He was attacking their fences that they had set up to feel safe.

- What do you do when your safety is threatened?

Commentary: Jesus takes all that the religious person had based their lives upon, discipline and self-righteousness, and turns it on its head. The religious leaders looked at the externals of the law. Jesus looked at the heart of the law. The law was intended to point out areas of the heart that fall short of God’s righteous requirements. No one would be made right with God based on their obedience to God because no one obeyed fully externally, let alone fully internally.

LOOK:

Conflict #1- A Man and His Friends Vs. 1-12

1. What are the interesting features of this story?

2. How does Jesus address the scribes?

Context: scribes were paid to copy the scriptures- they were the learned elite religious people of the day.

3. Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven"- Why is this such a big deal to the scribes?

Only God could forgive sins. Jesus was claiming to be God! Think about it... sin is against God. It would not make sense for me to say to you, "I forgive your sin", unless it was against me personally. This man had never met Jesus but Jesus forgives his sin. Jesus claim to deity, though not explicit, is implicit.

4. What is Jesus' implicit argument in his questioning of "which is easier"?

5. What did this man do to be forgiven?

It is interesting that he did nothing isn't it? We don't even see him repent. Jesus must have known something that only He could know about this man's heart. We know His words that one must "repent and believe in the gospel", so that must have been what the man had done at a heart level.

Most of you believe in salvation by faith alone, not by works. But don't you deep down think that you do something to acquire God's grace? We all think that we have done something just a bit better than the rest of the people that don't know God out there. If you aren't a Christian, you may be still looking for that magic move that will earn God's favor. But this guy doesn't do a thing. Could it be that Jesus has more control over our hearts than we realize? Could it also be that a heart response to Him is more important than any outward work? Isn't it good to know that Jesus knows our hearts even before we speak words?

Read: Jonathan Edwards on the evidences of true faith in the heart of a Christian. (Written in 1734 and therefore takes some work to read!)

THIS Light (of Gospel saving faith) is such as effectually influences the Inclination, and changes the Nature of the Soul. It assimilates the Nature to the divine Nature, and changes the Soul into an Image of the same Glory that is be- held. 2 Cor. 3:18. "But we all open Face beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This Knowledge will wean from the World, and raise the Inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the Heart to GOD as the Fountain of Good, and to choose him for the only Portion. This Light, and this only, will bring the Soul to a saving Closeness with CHRIST. It conforms the Heart to the Gospel, mortifies its Enmity and Opposition against the Scheme of Salvation therein revealed: It causes the Heart to embrace the joyful Tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the Revelation of CHRIST as our Saviour: It causes the whole Soul to accord and Symphonize with it, admitting it with entire Credit and Respect, cleaving to it with full Inclination and Affection. And it effectually disposes the Soul to give up it self entirely to CHRIST. Divine and Supernatural Light by Jonathan Edwards 1734

Conflict #2- A man no one liked Vs. 13-17

1. In this ancient day and age, what would you expect were the qualifications for a follower of God?

Purity, outward holiness, ritual observance, Levi (Matthew) had none of these qualities.

2. Who was Levi? How was he viewed by the Jews?

Levi was a tax-collector. In Mark's day, tax collectors were considered on the level of sinners. They preyed on the poverty of others and while living prosperous life economically, lived a life of poverty socially. Their only friends were fellow tax-collectors collectively living as traitors to their own people. Though Jews themselves, they worked as traitors for the Roman Empire collecting taxes on property and business. Only in Luke's Gospel is Levi referred to as Matthew. It was probably a nickname

given to Levi meaning “gift of Yahweh”. My guess is that no one considered Levi a gift other than Jesus.

3. What is the difference between the calling of Levi and the calling of the earlier disciples?

Previously, those Jesus called were fishermen, probably well-like people of the people, blue collar workers. They were religiously Jewish men who desired to please God. Levi on the other hand, being a tax-collector was inherently a “sinner”. A sinner defined by the religious leaders was anyone who did not follow the letter of the law religiously. He would have also been a member of the white collar, higher society. Jesus thus calls all walks of people to serve Him. It does not matter your past nor present status. Jesus is not ashamed to call sinners into his presence and have them represent Him to others.

4. God does not “come to call the righteous but sinners” vs. 17- No statement is more profound in Mark’s gospel than this one. Who is a sinner and who is righteous? Why does he say this?

Commentary: In 2:15-17, we see that the religious and moral type persons are not attracted to Jesus as are the non-religious and the moral outsiders. Jesus says: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” He uses both terms ironically. He is saying that the word “righteous” here means self-righteous, and the word “sinners” here means people who know they are sinful and in need of a Savior. Jesus is turning normal religion on its head. He does not congratulate those who have attained a high degree of theological precision and moral discipline. Instead he warns them that they might be the farthest from him. In the next few incidents, Jesus challenges all sorts of expectations and practices of the religious and moral establishment. Mark Study- pg. 25 Copyright © Timothy J. Keller, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church 2005

Conflict #3- The Law and Fasting 2:18-22

Context: The Pharisees were the strictest sect of Jewish zealots. They placed a tremendous burden on themselves and other Jews to obey the law. Notice here that it is John’s disciples and the Pharisees that address Jesus. They are spoken of simply as the “people”. This was the common voice approaching Jesus. It is to say that Jesus was causing a stir amongst all Jews, not just the zealots. Jesus’ lack of orthodoxy is beginning to disturb the Jewish community at large.

1. Look through the veneer of these two questions. What is really being asked?

The people seem to be making statements rather than really asking questions. Their accusations were that Jesus was not following the law as required. How could He come preaching God’s Kingdom while not coming under God’s legal authority? This is the way that we do things.... How come you do not follow the system if you claim to be our teacher?

2. What’s the purpose of fasting? What are the good aspects of religious fasting? How could fasting actually be used as a way to find safety APART from God?

Fasting can reveal and display one’s dependence and reliance on God. It can be a humble effort to draw near to Him. However, If religious duty leads to us feeling righteous because of our actions... duty then keeps us feeling safe by our own works rather than God’s works. Fasting can actually be done out of an attitude of self-reliance though feigning reliance on God.

3. Who is the bridegroom? What is the point of the analogy?

Context: *In ancient times wine was kept in goatskins. New skins were soft and pliable and would stretch when wine that had not yet completed fermentation was put in them. However, old wineskins that had been stretched would become brittle and being not longer pliable, were thus unable to stretch. The gas from the fermentation wine burst them open, destroying both wine and skins. Putting new wine into old wineskins (v.22) and patching an old garment with a new cloth (v. 21) are just as inappropriate as fasting at a wedding feast. A wedding, new wine and new garment are all symbols of the New Age. The main teaching of the parable seems to be that the newness the coming of Jesus brings cannot be confined to the old forms. Walter W. Wessel Expositor's Bible Commentary pg. 636*

Jesus is the bridegroom, we are the bride. Can you imagine what it means to say that we are the bride to the bridegroom King? That would have been a wild, radical thought. Perhaps it is a wild, radical thought to you. It should be a wild, radical thought to all of us! The king of the universe wants us as his bride. What honor, glory, closeness and power is offered.

4. What is the main point of the story?

Jesus brings "safety" through grace not law which brings joy not drudgery.

Conflicts 4 and 5- The Law and the Sabbath 2:23-3:6

Context: *It is important to see how Mark puts together his Gospel. He is not often overly concerned with chronology of events. You will see that the ordering of events often conflict with Matthew's and Luke's. Rather than letting chronology guide His gospel, He is building theological themes. The specific times and places of events are often not given. Here as in other places, the connection is the theme of the incident as he builds a pattern for the rising conflict against Jesus*

1. What was the purpose of the Sabbath? How might the purpose of the Sabbath be lost?

If the purpose of Sabbath is soul rest, then if we observe the Sabbath as a work to obey God, it actually can come from great soul distress and duty. This is not to say that duty and obedience are wrong. However, if we, like the religious people of Jesus day base our lives on our performance for God rather than God's gracious acceptance, there will be no true rest.

Commentary: Understanding "Sabbath"

- a) *The first time we see "Sabbath" in the Bible is in Genesis where after the 7th day of creation, God rested. Interestingly, the 7th day, unlike day 1-6 has no end. We are invited into a world designed for God's rest eternally. Furthermore, it is not that God stopped working on the 7th day. But His pattern of completing creation had finished. Completeness had come. Now he works constantly to rule and reign over his completion, but nothing was left undone requiring further work.*
- b) *That pattern of rest has been thwarted by the introduction of sin into the world. But still the pattern remains. You and I, all of creation, were designed for God's rest yet don't fully experience it because of our disconnection from God through sin.*
- c) *Early on in the OT we are given commands for Sabbath as a model to experience what will one day be complete again. The Sabbath rest is not complete and will never substitute for God's complete rest that He will once again restore some day. But it is meant as a precursor or foreshadow of that which is to come fully one day at Christ's return.*

**For an in-depth understanding of Sabbath, see: Nature of Shabbat by Tracey R. Rich at the end of this section*

*For questions on Jesus' usage of "Abiathar" as High Priest, see: <https://bible.org/article/mark-226-and-problem-abiathar>

2. In 2:23-3:6 What does Jesus say about Himself as He claims to be Lord of the Sabbath?

Again, He is implicitly claiming to be God! God alone is Lord over the Sabbath. The old system was meant to point to Jesus. Now Jesus has come. We should listen to Him in person!

3. What point does Jesus say that they are missing about the Sabbath?

They are missing the heart of the Sabbath. The heart of the Sabbath is pointing us to true rest found in God alone. It is not simply about "not working" to be approved by God. It is giving us an experience of physical rest that points us to our need for spiritual rest.

Commentary: Practically speaking, there are two "levels" of the rest that the Sabbath day points to. First, there is a deep spiritual rest that we can enter into immediately. Hebrews tells us "There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for anyone who enters God's rest, rests from his own work, just as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:9) The words "now" and "today" figure prominently in Hebrews 3 and 4 when talking of this rest. We can enter God's Sabbath rest now by believing the gospel. This rest begins when we rest from our good works/our own righteousness, and experience forgiveness of sins through Christ alone. All the sweating and anxious striving is over. We know God has accepted us. When Hebrews says: "[we] rest... just as God did from his," it shows how our rest in the finished work of redemption (by Christ) is an image of God's Sabbath rest from the finished work of creation in Genesis 2:2. In the beginning, God said, "my work is finished!" so he could rest. On the cross, Jesus said, "my work is finished!" so we could rest.

However, as the miraculous healing of the shriveled hand shows us, the ultimate Sabbath rest is the healing of all creation (Psalm 96, 98; Revelation 21). God's Sabbath rule of creation in Genesis 2:2 will be reestablished through the work of Christ, and eventually everything will be put right again. All death, disease, decay, war, poverty, dissension, and brokenness will be wiped away. Everything will be "unshriveled." But we don't have to wait for the Second Coming of Christ to seek this rest. Though we don't have miraculous power, we are to follow Jesus and seek this rest by working to heal the brokenness of the world through ministries of word and deed. We evangelize, counsel, feed, build, and embrace people with the gospel and the gifts of the Spirit to do what Jesus did on the Sabbath.

Ironically, it is only as we enjoy the "rest" of the work of redemption that we will be able to truly enter into the "rest" of restoring and renewing the creation. That is why Jesus said that we cannot get true rest simply through Sabbath regulations, but only through him (Mark 2:27-28). Why? When we use work to earn a sense of self-worth, then the work (ironically) is not about the work itself, or others — but it is about us. We are doing it for ourselves — for the money and status we need to shore up our identity. But if we 'rest' from our work by trusting in the finished work of Christ, we can truly be liberated to give of our money and time and heart to be a sign of the coming kingdom and the Sabbath rest. Mark Study page 30- Copyright © Timothy J. Keller, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church 2005

4. If Jesus sets apart the letter of the law here in this section, what advantage does the law have? Does it have any? In other words, as a Christian today do we still need to follow the law? Why or why not?

We now follow the law as that which pleases God rather than that which gains God's approval or love. If I am to love my wife, I must know what makes her happy. But her love for me is not dependent on my making her happy. Her love for me is a choice she makes rather than a day-to-day feeling... (I hope!)

When I ask my son to obey me (obey my law), it is always for his good and protection. When he was young, he loved to crawl into the dishwasher when it was opened, and play with the knives. Of

course I told him, “Stop!” It was not that I was trying to be controlling of his will so that I would get pleasure in my authority. It was actually not even that it pleased me when he obeyed me. It was primarily that I knew what was best and safe for him and his desires were contrary to what was best and safe for Him. His innate longings clouded his vision of what was true and good. He didn’t have the wisdom or perspective that I had in the situation. God has all wisdom and perspective and His law is always good, right and best.

In our world today, modern humanity has the hubris to think that we possess enough wisdom and knowledge to plan our own ways. It is like ancient people who didn’t know that the world was round. If your perspective is limited by a foundational error in your understanding of the universe, it leads to all sorts of uneducated and dangerous decisions. If we believe that we are our own gods of our own personal universe when the truth is that there is one God over all the universe, life has the potential to fall apart. Society falls apart. Humans are on a course of death.

*For a further conversation on different aspects of Jewish law and how to determine what is relevant for today, see: [You Eat Pork Don’t You?](#) By Miles O’Neill at the end of this study.

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

You Eat Pork Don’t You? By Miles O’Neill

(Different Aspects of the Jewish Law- What do we follow?)

When looking at the ethical commands of the Bible, most scholars tell us that there are three main categories of Old Testament Law. They are the Civil, Ceremonial and Moral.

The Civil laws are the practical laws addressed to Israel as a nation state and specifically pertain to the preservation of the societal life in that context. An example of a civil law is Deuteronomy 15:1, "At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts." Or, Exodus 21:16-17 "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death. Anyone who curses his mother or father is put to death." (ESV) Often they contain a command and prescribe penalty for disobedience.

Ceremonial laws pertain to the Old Testament sacrificial system. They are rules of how to worship God rightly as a community. An example is in Deuteronomy 16:13, which instructed the Israelites to "celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress." (ESV)

The Moral law category is fairly intuitively understood. They are prescriptions of moral conduct. The 10 commandments are the central examples of moral law commands, though not all moral law is contained in the Decalogue. Jesus later qualifies our understanding showing that the moral law reflects not just actions, but heart conditions behind the actions.

There is a long tradition among scholars that suggests we decide on the modern validity of the laws in each of these categories in the following ways:

In the case of the Civil Law category, they were designed for the nation of Israel as it functioned as a nation state under the sovereign rule of God. These laws no longer pertain to us today as the document called the Westminster confession outlines: They are "sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people (Israel)" (XIX. 4).“ Richard D. Phillips comments, “In other words, these laws were for regulating the nation of Israel, which was then

but no longer is the particular people of God. While there is an undisputed wisdom contained in this civil law it cannot be made applicable to any nation today, since there are no biblically sanctioned theocracies now.⁴¹

In the case of the Ceremonial Laws; the person of Christ fulfilled these laws explicitly. That is, they were meant to prepare a categorical system of understanding that Jesus would come to fulfill. For example, the command to sacrifice of a lamb on the day of Passover (Exodus 12:1-20) was fulfilled perfectly one day by Jesus' own sacrifice on the day of Passover. Or in the preceding example from Deut 16:13, Israel was to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a celebration of remembrance of Israel's time in the dessert where they set up tents (tabernacles) as they followed God in his temporary tabernacle. Now God no longer lives in a physical tabernacle, but Jesus' spirit "tabernacles" with each one of us who is a believer. The law pointed toward and has now been fulfilled in Christ and is no longer binding.

The Moral law category is the one that we focus on today. These laws are timeless, crossing both Old and New Testament periods. Or, more precisely, they transcend Old Covenant to New Covenant (after Jesus' death and resurrection) times of today. They derive from God's Holy character which never changes so the demands of the moral law never change. The Westminster confession illuminates: "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof" (WCF XIX. 5). For a Christian, the moral law both reveals God's character to us and tells us how to live a life pleasing to Him. Adherence to the moral law is not what brings someone into a relationship with Christ. We will never follow it closely enough to erase our moral culpability. But it gives us a guide in how to live as one under the rule of the one who has given us a relationship with Himself through grace.

It can therefore be said, with respect to the question of why Christians suggest we follow some laws and not others; they come to us in different categories from the Old Testament to accomplish different purposes. Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial laws making them obsolete. The demise of the Nation State of Israel also led to the obsolescence of the civil laws as societal imperatives. However it is the moral laws stemming from God's moral character that is still binding on into the present New Covenant period. This can be further verified by that fact that all of the Ten Commandments originally given in the Old Testament are reiterated in the New Testament. If Jesus, Paul or other New Testament authors verify laws of the Old Testament in the New Testament, it gives legitimacy to their timeless application.

Jesus and the Law

So let's look at how the New Testament talks about the moral law. As I mentioned, the whole of the Ten Commandments can indeed be found within the corpus of the New Testament teaching validating their role in New Covenant life. However, Jesus gave us a refined understanding on how to handle these laws today.

In Matthew 5, Jesus in his famous Sermon on the Mount says, ⁴¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (ESV)

However, Jesus also tells us that Jesus fulfills the whole law and now under the New Covenant the law is bound in the ethic of loving God and loving others. Matthew 22:27-40 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (ESV)

So which is it? Jesus reduces the law to the two Great Commandments of Matthew 22 or Jesus teaches that not one "iota" will be removed from the Law validating not only the moral law, but the entire Old Testament system of laws? The answer lies in the heart of the message of the Sermon on the Mount and indeed in the heart of New Testament teaching. Jesus' radical message was to beware of making the externals of the law the measuring stick of a life under the reign of God. The whole law is relevant as it reveals our heart issues before God. ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, "Raca", is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Matthew 5:21-22(ESV) It is not only the outward adherence to the law that is required. Even inner anger is equated with murder! The outward expression is only a measure to reveal the true heart condition of the follower.

Jesus' call under the new covenant is actually much more demanding not less demanding. Matthew 5:20 ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."(ESV) The bar is raised, not lowered. Our righteousness will never surpass that of the

Pharisees (religious elites of the day) on our own. The bar is so high that only Christ lived the law perfectly in heart and deed. The only way that our righteousness will be enough is if God gives us His righteousness. It is not conformity to the law, even to the heart of the law that gets us His righteousness. It is belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross that gives us the required righteousness. It is regeneration by the Spirit of God that he works within our hearts, not the external law. It could be said that the law is not what saves, but the law both points out our inability to save ourselves and then gives us a guide in how to live rightly unto God once we are in a saving relationship with Him. Therefore it is at once no longer legally binding, but at the same time incredibly valuable as it convicts our hearts and then acts as a moral guide of how to honor God.

To begin with some examples for application, let's return to look at the civil and ceremonial law categories. While not binding they still reveal the heart and character of God. We learn the moral character of God as we see the outworking of his character through those outdated systems. For example, why this Old Testament civil law to avoid eating pork? "And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch." (Deuteronomy 14:8 ESV) It was ultimately to set a precedent for the need of perfect cleanness as God's people. To eat an animal that rolled in the mud and lived close to the dirt of the ground represented a tainting of purity before God. In order to create vivid life pictures of people's need for purity.... ultimately of the heart, God set examples in the civil lives of the people of Israel. So, while the civil command to avoid pork is no longer valid, the heart of the law is still valid as God's character has not changed. He demands perfection. That perfection has been satisfied in His Son and is available through Him now. But the heart of the law, to be pure for God in the way that we live our lives, is still morally right for us personally and for society as a whole.

Here is another example. Leviticus 25:10 talks about a year of Jubilee where everyone is commanded to give up one's property! It says, "Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan." (ESV) What do we do with this? I'd like to see Warren Buffet read this one. Remember, the heart of the law has not changed, but of course there are significant differences between an agrarian near eastern culture, and the world of today. The heart of generosity, the heart of not exploiting others, treating business manners in fairness and equity for all, these still remain. We do not keep the year of jubilee in a literal sense as prescribed under the civil law because we no longer live in a nation state of one religion under the rule of God. But even today, the heart of the law still remains. We still are called to generosity, to fairness, to equity etc. Once again, it is best for us personally and it is best for us as a society. We are called to love God and love others, these are the greatest laws.

Here's an example from the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians women are commanded to cover their heads. 1 Corinthians 11:4- 6 ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head." (ESV) How should we apply this odd command? Perhaps there is a different cultural way in which we carry out the same heart of the ordinance. In ancient times, women who were married showed honor to their husbands by wearing head coverings. It was a symbol of honor and integrity. So today, women who are married wear a wedding band displaying the same connection to their husband. The heart of the law has not changed though the cultural customs have seen through to new expressions.

In these examples, the underlying motive of Love for God and Love for others is the substructure to which the law points. Therefore, the Christian follows the law today, not arbitrarily, but with a view to loving God and loving others out of a response to what God has done in his grace for them. We do not set aside certain laws based on cultural desires. We set aside those either fulfilled in Christ, or not pertaining to the nation state of Israel. We now eat pork without second thought. We now shave our beards. We no longer sacrifice animals. Though we set them aside as not binding, there is not one jot or tittle of the law that is not instructive in understanding the heart and holiness of God. So, positively, we do love others, we do give to the poor, we do memorize God's Word so on and so on. The heart of these laws stem from God's character and though times and specific expression change, the heart from which they stem does not. We are always morally bound to do what honors God and what is best for those with whom we share the earth. There will be argument about the specific ramifications of how that is lived out since we are now lead by the spirit and the list of New Testament is much more sparse than the Old Testament. However, once again, it is not arbitrary and the Word of God is the guide for the Christian and not cultural pressure. (Miles O'Neill excerpt from "With a View Towards the Elevation of the Conversation on Homosexuality")

Lesson 4– Kingdom Community

[Chapter 3:7–3:35]

HOOK:

**Context: Each section of Mark reveals more about the person of Jesus. Mark will quickly move from Jesus' arrival to Galilee, His ministry in Galilee- Teaching, Healing and Suffering, onto his ministry in Jerusalem and finally to his suffering on the cross. It is as if Mark is quickly, but intently revealing the person and deity of Jesus in small steps.*

After verse 3:6 there is a break from ministry to the religious community to a retreat into the wilderness. Matthew tells us that Jesus withdraws due to a threat to His life. A crowd follows like usual, only it has grown larger. Sidon is approximately 60 miles NW of Galilee, Jerusalem 100 miles North. That means people are now coming from everywhere. People possessed by demons are shouting His name. People lean in to touch Him. It must have been a sight to behold.

So, the pattern of Jesus' ministry has now been laid. He teaches, heals and forgives as He goes about. Furthermore, a fundamental break with organized religion has been made. Jesus has not come in the way that a Messiah was expected to come and He is not acquiring political power as expected to take. But the matter in which He has come is drawing attention and His popularity is getting out of control.

Now we enter into a new phase of Jesus' revelation in Galilee. We encounter Jesus beginning to build a community of followers and He explains to them in increasing detail who He is and what He has come to do. Tim Keller says, "He builds this community through serving people, teaching, preaching, training, counseling, healing, and liberating".

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- What has community meant to you for your growth in Christ?
- Imagine that you were the only Christian that you knew of. What would that be like?
- What has community meant for you for your growth in Christ's mission?

LOOK:

Forming of a Community Vs. 7-12

1. Jesus moves from addressing the ruling elite both religious and political leaders to creating a new community of followers. Why is this important? What does it reveal about Jesus?

Jesus is bringing some of the followers in close. He wants to teach a select few in order to one day reach the masses. If you think about Jesus' character, wisdom, humility- this is pretty radical. Why would he entrust His very name to a community of misfits? This shows Jesus commitment to and knowledge that community is a significant way that God has created the universe. From the trinity existing before time, to Jesus' life and ministry, community would be the foundation.

2. A fundamental break with organized religion has taken place. Where do you see this in the passage? Why is this significant? What does it say about Jesus' mission? Notice the contrast between 3:6 and 3:7-8

Jesus is not concerned with furthering religious protocol. He is doing something radical of course. He is a revolutionary. Think about it... where do revolutions start? Jesus goes to the wilderness to get away from the power structures and start a new community of radical Jesus followers.

3. Jesus' popularity is getting out of control. He has to escape by boat so not to get trampled. What is your sense of what they want from Jesus? Do you relate at all (be honest!)?

-They wanted healing, not salvation, not Jesus. They probably also wanted to just see the spectacle that people were talking about. Jesus was become en vogue and everyone wanted a piece of Him.

-Try and get people to open up here. Why do you want Jesus? Is it something that you want from Him or do you want Him? Do you want Him or what He gives you?

-What if there were no benefits, social, physical, even emotional benefits to following Jesus, but He is true, real and eternal life awaits. Would you still follow Him?

The Community is Sent Vs. 13-21

1. Why does Jesus send the twelve?

**Context: Jesus now turns towards the Disciples. From here on, they are no longer part of the larger community following Jesus. They are "Apostles", "sent ones", (apostoloi). Twelve is a meaningful number connecting Jesus' ministry to the Old Testament. It signifies the twelve tribes of Israel with whom God entered into covenant. Christianity is Jewish you have to remember! Jesus has not come to start something new. He comes to fulfill all that was foretold in the Jewish scriptures. Some were able to see. Some remained in their blindness.*

Jesus now prepares a pattern of ministry for what will remain after He leaves the earth. He entrusts to the 12 the ministry that He would soon entrust to all who believe after them.... Even you and I. (John 17)

2. Mark records their nicknames- firsthand from Peter. Why do you think he mentions their nicknames? What does it tell us about Jesus?

Neither Matthew nor Luke records these names. Certainly this is because Mark was getting his information from Peter, one of the 12 him self. Can you imagine if Jesus gave you a nickname... or at least called you by your nickname? Jesus KNEW the disciples. He cared for them. It tells us the thoughtfulness, care, humanity of Jesus. These were indeed brother to Jesus. He loved them and they He.

3. Think about Jesus' emotions at this point. The religious leaders try and confound Him. His family has rejected Him. His hometown will reject Him. Demons shout His name. A group comes from Jerusalem to take Jesus to be their leader. People love Him or hate Him. Think of Jesus, tired and weary. The two communities in which he should be safe, His family and the religious leaders think he has gone mad! What is Jesus' emotional state? How does he not give up?

Jesus, yes, was fully God. Yet He was fully man. This is one of the most difficult teachings of the Bible. If He were not fully God, He could not pay for the sins of the world. If He were not fully man, he could not live a sinless life as human to pay our human debt. Both are essential. However, we do Jesus great disservice and our own understanding of Him is lacking if we do not come to grips with His humanity. Mark shows us the human Jesus. He had friends, He grieved, He was angered, he cried. All that is human, Jesus experienced. As we move forward, catch the glimpses of Jesus' humanity. Look at how he maintains focus and commitment to his calling. You and I must likewise learn these skills.

If He was human, how did he persevere all that He went through? He had community from the beginning of time with the greatest three amigos that have ever existed- the Trinity. Remember vs. 1:12? "This is my son with whom I am well pleased". Jesus had community with the most important community that one could ever have and then He retreated to be with His Father often. Do you think that we need to retreat to be with the Father if Jesus did?

Read: Mark 1:32-39. How does He hang on? What's the model for us?

The “IN” are out and the “OUT” are in Vs. 22-35

1. Why did I name this section as I did?

**Context: Realize what is happening. Jesus' family has traveled 25 miles from Nazareth to Capernaum. They have had a family meeting and have determined that Jesus is out of His mind and they have come to take Him home. Another group from Jerusalem has traveled 100 miles to put Him under investigation. It seems they have determined that He is in league with demonic powers.*

This is one of the main themes of Mark's Gospel. The community that should have been “IN” with Jesus, His family and the religious people don't understand Him. However, the community that understands their need for healing and forgiveness- the weak and poor, they are “IN”.

2. Typify each of the groups, (family and religious leaders). What was each group thinking? What did each have to gain or lose from Jesus' ministry? What group's response best reflects where you are at with Jesus?

*For further discussion on “sinning against the Holy Spirit” see: [A Note on vv.28-29](#) by Tim Keller at the end of this study.

***Notebooks:** Where are you at in Christian community? Who would you say that you are in community with? Do they really know you? Do they know your struggles and your doubts? Are you truly real with anyone? Share with the group.

TOOK:

Ask:

- What do you come to Jesus for?
- What is missing in your community?
- What is missing in the mission of your community?

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Commentary on vv. 28-29 –

The “sin against the Holy Spirit” can be interpreted this way:

First, at the most basic level, Jesus is saying (in v. 28) that there is no sin per se that cannot be forgiven. He says “all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven.” He does not say, “all but one.” He means that there is no particular disobedient action in itself that is unforgivable. When thinking of the “sin against the Holy Spirit” we should not imagine Jesus is talking about some action that is impervious to God’s mercy.

But Jesus has just been accused of working with Satan’s power rather than the Spirit’s power. Why? The religious leaders find Jesus’ Messiahship does not fit their religious conceptions. They wanted a Messiah who (a) came in strength and worldly power, and (b) delivered the good and moral people over against the wicked and pagan people. Instead, Jesus comes as a Messiah who (a) comes in weakness and suffering, and (b) delivers outsiders and people who admit their sin over against the proud and self-sufficient. Jesus is redefining the kingdom in terms of grace. The leaders resist this gospel — they think it is “of the devil”. Jesus, however, says that when they reject the gospel they are really resisting the Holy Spirit, who is the real power behind Jesus.

Now if you refuse to believe the gospel, and offend against the most basic work of the Spirit, then there is no way to forgiveness. If you believe in the gospel, any sin is forgivable, no matter how heinous. But if you don’t believe in the gospel — no sin forgivable. If you refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit’s testimony to the truth of the gospel, then there is no hope. The frightening thing is that it is possible to be very religious and moral and “miss” the gospel.

Note: It is possible that the sin against the Holy Spirit is mainly something that religious people do. Jesus only accuses religious leaders of it. This is a sin which can be committed by religious leaders (like the Pharisees) who, though deeply immersed in the Bible and religion, and having seen with their own eyes the miracles and changed lives of Jesus, nevertheless rejected Jesus as Savior.

Summary: Jesus’ statement in v. 28 is that all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven. How can this be true in light of v. 29? Almost the only explanation is that a lack of repentance (spiritual pride) is the only sin that can kill you. If you repent, any and all sins are forgiven. But if you don’t repent, there’s not forgiveness for any thing. In any case, one thing is clear. If you are worried about having committed this sin, you certainly haven’t committed it. Anyone who is committing v. 29 isn’t worried or humble — and that’s the opposite of blasphemy! Tim Keller Romans Study pg. 36

Lesson 5- Kingdom Growth

[Chapter 4:1-34]

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- What are the different ways that people respond to Jesus in today's world when confronted with who He says He is?
- Deep question #1: What are the healthy and unhealthy ways that you respond to Jesus in your own heart and actions when you are confronted with who He is and why He came?

LOOK:

The Soils Vs. 1-20

1. Look at Jesus intro to this section. Notice how He addresses the crowd. What stands out about his approach to preaching?

He doesn't tell jokes, use hooks or tell stories. He doesn't wear skinny jeans and have a faux hawk. He isn't trying to be the most "relevant" teacher. He just says "listen"! Then he teaches in parables. And this one he does not explain to the audience. Its as if he wants to leave them unsettled, pondering. He doesn't care about people leaving talking about what a great teacher He is. He would rather they are not able to escape the questioning of their own hearts.

2. Is there any thing that is problematic to you in the way that Jesus describes the use of parables? Vs. 10-12 are a bit troubling to me. Do they trouble you? Why quote Isaiah and what is the connection to 3:29?

Why would God NOT want some to return and be forgiven? Isn't that what He is saying? That can't be. Of course, Jesus has the advantage of divine knowledge. He knows who will turn and be forgiven. He speaks in such a way as to stir the hearts of those He knows will listen and understand. "He who has ears, let him hear" is His challenge. There are those that will hear the parable and understand, and there are those that will hear, and not hear, and not perceive and they will not "turn and be forgiven".

The connection to 3:29 flows succinctly. There are those that will never turn towards Christ and in essence they then "blaspheme the Holy Spirit" by denying His initiation to their hearts and minds. Such a person will never have forgiveness because they have denied the reality of God. Such are the people prophesied in Isaiah and such are the people who will not comprehend the parables.

3. This could be called the "Parable of the Soils". It is not so much about the sower as it is the soil in which He sows. Identify the soils. Can you give examples of how these practically look today? Have their been points in your own lives that represent each soil?

- Some falls on the path and is eaten by birds.
- Some falls on rocky soil and comes up quickly, but just as quickly it withers in the sun.
- Some falls among weeds and is choked out.
- Some falls on rich ground and thrives.

4. Assuming we want to have rich ground for our own soil, how do we cultivate that type of soil? How do we cultivate a heart that follows Jesus, not just a action that obeys what we think is the moral decision?

Leaders: Don't settle for trite answers. "Read our Bibles and go to church"! Press in. How, during their time in college do they cultivate a rich soil amidst the cultural pressures around them?

5. Jesus explains the soils in vs. 13-20. Hearing and implementing what we hear seems to be a key. What blocks your hearing? Why do you lose attention?

Comentary: When Parables are used there is one main point to the parable. There is a danger in making the parable say more than it is actually saying. Here, in this parable there is danger in overanalyzing all the soils and their particular relationship to our personal lives. Herein Jesus is saying, "Listen" wake up...God is in charge of building his kingdom and he will do the sowing.

One of the questions that often is raised about soils #2 and #3 is — are these people real Christians who have "fallen away" or are these people who were never Christians? Soil #2 does not appear to represent true disciples, but there is doubt about soil #3. The view that these are Christians rests on the fact that v. 19 shows that the plant grows and seems to last. (The second soil produces plants that "fall away" — they die off). But though it doesn't wither, it also bears no fruit. Thus it is of no more use to the farmer than the grain that never sprouted at all. So a fruitless Christian is a loss to the Master.

What is "fruit" that a Christian should produce? It is probably meant to be a very comprehensive term. In Paul, it can refer to character change (the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22ff is love, joy, peace, patience, humility, self-control), or to serving others and bringing about changes in their lives (Romans 1:13 speaks of his coming to Rome to preach and to "have a harvest among you".) Tim Keller Mark Study pg 41

6. This parable can be discouraging. I don't often feel like I am "rich soil". I will never "pay attention" enough. I will never follow God with ALL of my heart. In some sense if you are a Christian you are in a losing fight with your own heart. You will never be enough or do enough for God. Then what is the motivation to keep on going?

Leaders: Growth will not happen by focusing on our soil and disciplining ourselves towards maturity. Don't end this lesson with a self-help program towards moralism! The great message of the Gospel is what keeps us going! I will never be enough for God on my own, but Jesus was enough for God and for me. Jesus was the ultimate rich soil so that his soil is now attributed to us. God views Jesus' soil as our soil! Mark "immediately" moves us towards Jesus mission on the cross. He succeeded where every other human fails. When He dies, he "listens" to his Father and "pays attention" for us since we have not listened or paid attention enough. If we focus on our soil as the means to growth, we will fail. If we look at the cross and see the one with the ultimate great soil, we will take the focus off our selves and see Jesus as the motivation for growth and maturity- rather than growth and maturity being the goal in and of itself.

The lamp Vs. 21-25

1. What's the main point of this parable?

Context: Light in ancient times was vitally significant. There was no infrastructure in a city providing light. Once the sun set, life stopped unless there was light. When a family had a lamp, it was the gathering point of life during hours of darkness. One could not imagine light being hidden or not used for its purpose. Light was vital for life and brought others to find life as well.

The disciples have been chosen to spread the KOG. The life of the follower of Jesus is one of purpose. The main purpose is to be a part of the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

2. What is the motivation to make your lamp stand out?

Again, we will not stand enough. We will not stand up enough as we should. But Jesus stood up for us. He stood up on the cross. His light shined for the world to see. His light was the culmination and center point of all History. When we look at His light, it causes our light to shine. We want to shine as we see His great suffering and resurrection for us. He sees His light shining for us. God has now put Jesus light in the place of our dim lights. We cannot ultimately fail.

Vs. 26-29 The Miracle of the Seed

1. Why does he tell this parable now? What is he telling his disciples?

He is about to send them out to spread the message of the KOG. He is establishing that it is He that does the real work, not them. They must simply be obedient to do their task and God will be the power behind them.

2. If this is true, what confidence should we have in being a part in the establishment of the KOG today, here and now?

It is easy to feel like there is a losing battle going on around us. Being a student at a liberal arts University can even heighten this sense. It can seem like Christian teaching and ideals are being disregarded and even mocked at an alarming rate. But this is no surprise to God. He is in control. What more... who cares if Christian ideals are mocked? We must hold Christ high and let "ideals" flow out of people encountering Christ. It is not some moral position that Christians should be known for but rather for the King that we follow. Christianity does not hinge on whether or not Christians inhabit the power structures of society. Jesus did not pursue the power structures for His Kingdom. Rather, His model, as I have been saying was Teaching, Healing and Suffering. Such will be the model in our modern day as well.

The Mustard Seed Vs. 30-34

1. What's the point of this parable?

The point is similar to the miracle of the seed. The KOG is fueled by God himself. It will grow to immense proportions. We should take confidence. Even if we do not see it now, it is God's promise.

2. What does this parable teach us about Jesus' mission?

***Notebooks:** Write down: What seeds are you planting? Write down the motivations that Mark has given so far to be a "healthy soil", "light shiner", "seed planter". What seeds could you plant and leave the results up to God? Share with the group.

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 6– Kingdom Authority

[Chapters 4:35–5:43]

HOOK:

Watch #2: <http://www.history.com/shows/the-bible/videos/the-bible-recap-hour-7>

Read the section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- How do you deal with authority figures in your life? Are you submissive? Rebellious? Easy to lead, hard to lead?
- If Jesus wants to be your authority, how does that make you feel? Is it easy to submit or hard? Why?

LOOK:

A Great Wind, A Great Calm and a Great Fear- Authority over Nature 4:35-41

Context: Jesus needed a break. He was tired from serving so many people. (Jesus is human right?) He falls asleep in the boat and “a great windstorm arose”. The Sea of Galilee was situated such that windstorms often arose in the evening. Rough weather was not unusual. Though this storm seems to be something different. The boat was filling and the fishermen were fearful for their lives. Jesus is woken and speaks and the winds calm... “a great calm” in antithesis of a “great windstorm”. Jesus is in control of nature! Furthermore, there is an OT backdrop here. In Isaiah 51, The Lord is accused of sleeping and not caring about Israel. They said that God was asleep! So here too given this context- the disciples accuse Jesus of being asleep. Oh how much they had to learn! The disciples are the ones that need to wake up! They have already been exposed to his authority and power, his care and concern, but how quickly they forget.

1. Look at the two times “fear” is used in this story. Notice how the disciples “fear” transitions from fearing one thing to fearing another? What is Mark telling us?

The disciples start in fear of nature but end up fearing the power of Jesus. Fear can rule us as human beings. But if God is real, fear is just a disbelief of God’s control and care for us. We ought to fear God, not the situational circumstances of life. (When we talk of “fear” of God, a better translation would be “awful reverence”. We don’t fear Him in the sense that He will do something harmful to us, but rather respect and revere His power)

2. Deep Question #1: Have you ever feared something or a situation or so much that your natural instinct was to think God was out of control?

3. Deep Question #2: Are there fears in your life that rule you or disable you from living in freedom?

4. What are the top qualities Jesus is trying to produce in these disciples’ lives?

Commentary: He is building faith. Faith will sustain them after he departs. Good morals, helping others, even miraculous power will not keep them going. Belief and trust in the King will keep them going. Furthermore, doing good things is not Jesus’ aim. Faith in the one who created and deserves glory is Jesus’ main aim. One can do all sorts of amazing things in life but be very far from God who

designed us to live in service to Him. “Goodness” is not the ultimate goal, right relationship with God is.

Think about it. Our world is full of “good”, “well-meaning” people. If that were the qualification for relationship with God, then there would be many who would be Christians who don’t actually profess His name. In other words we wouldn’t need Jesus to have a relationship with God. That wouldn’t make any sense. If Jesus is just wanting us to be well-meaning, moral people, then there are lots of ways to enforce that type of behavior. Many religions and cultures have done so over the years. But Jesus is after something far different.

Remember, the moral standard required to connect with God is perfection. He is perfect so those that he created and want connection with a perfect being must by logic be perfect as well. Herein is another problem; even really good people, are not perfect. God cannot accept us on our own performance because it will never be good enough. Even our intentions will never be good enough. So someone or something else has to perform well enough for God so that He can accept us based on that thing/person’s performance. Since we are humans, only a human substitute logically will do. But only a divine substitute can truly be perfect. So the Divine Human, Jesus, died in order to take our penalty of imperfection upon Him self and return us to right, perfect standing with God for which we were designed.

It is therefore not “being good” that Jesus wants for us. It is being “right” with God and that can only be done through Jesus. Jesus, far from being non-necessary, is truly and ultimately necessary for rightness with a holy God and can be found nowhere else. I am glad that there are good, well-meaning people in the world today. I believe they are actually showing that the imprint of God’s character is on their souls. But just being a good, well-meaning person is not enough. God is after worshippers of Himself rather than worshippers of our own good, well-meaning selves.

Authority over Evil 5:1-20

1. Describe the situation. What is significant about the location?

Context: The “man” responds that his name is “legion”. In ancient times, a legion of armed forces was about 2000 men. There were 2000 evil spirits tormenting this man!

The event takes place in the county of the Gerasenes. This was across the Sea of Galilee. This was Gentile land opposed to Jewish land. For the Jewish people, the Roman Gentiles were the root of all their problems. They were the ruling oppressors. A Messiah, if he were to come, would surely rid the land of oppression. Now Jesus actually goes to the Gentiles and what more, He heals one and sets Him free.

2. Are Jesus’ actions reasonable? Why was there a negative response?

One would think that, yes, Jesus healed this man! But, for a pig herding community, this was a serious economic disaster. The people cared more about their financial state than their spiritual state. They were also afraid.... Who has such power? The people didn’t want to deal with such a person. He inspired fear and economic despair. It was safer to just have him leave.

3. Speculate, why do you think Jesus performed this exorcism?

In this story, two of the greatest forces in human nature are exposed, a lust for comfort and an avoidance of fear. Jesus exposed the community’s need for financial comfort and security and also caused them to fear the unknown spiritual realities. We are similar to them are we not? Wouldn’t we react the same way? Jesus knows human nature and attacks the great idols in this story.

Furthermore, after witnessing this miracle, you cannot deny that there is more going on than just a physical existence. The spiritual/demonic forces are real and one must come to terms with that. It will not suffice to go on in life ignoring the deeper realities.

4. Why did Jesus NOT command the demon-possessed man to be quiet in this situation as opposed to others where people have been told to keep quiet?

Notice the region.... The Gerasenes. This was a gentile region. The gentiles had no pre-conceived ideas of the Messiah. They were free from all the trappings of expectation. This man was rather told to go and tell! There was no danger in the gentile audience attaching some sort of false messianic hopes and so looking for political power through Jesus. He was blessed to bless others with the name of Jesus.

5. How does this story in Mark's gospel show the Gospel loud and clear?

Jesus goes to the people that the Jews would not care about. In fact the Jews would rather the "gentile pigs" be sent to their death in the sea. Jesus rescued a man possessed by evil, trapped in his desperation. All the man could do was recognize who Jesus was. He simply humbled himself before Him and acknowledged Jesus as the "Son of the most high God". Think about this: how would Jesus ultimately forgive this man who lived in the tombs? Jesus would soon go to His own tomb! In that tomb Jesus would do away with the evil that prevented this man from knowing God. This is an encounter with Jesus and the man simply responded to who He is. This is the Gospel!

Authority over Sickness 5:21-34

Ask: There are all sorts of intriguing details in this story. Read it and mention some of the things you see.

1. Jesus crosses back to Jewish region. Jairus, a Jewish leader asks for Jesus' help. Why is this included?

Jairus was one of the established ruling class. There were some like him that were coming to terms with who Jesus was. Jesus was seeking faith. He was not interested whether people had religious/non-religious, rich/poor, famous/obscure status. He came for anyone from any background that would admit their need for God.

2. The touching of Jesus' garment healed the sick women, what is happening here?

Context: *This woman had a blood flow sickness. More than sounding miserable, it was living hell! She had a physical problem yet it led to financial, social and spiritual problems. She would have spent all her money on finding a cure. She would have been outcast by society. Finally, most severe to a pious Jewish woman, she would have been cut off from the temple and not able to worship in the "presence" of God. This woman represents multiple facets of suffering and need. Furthermore, an outcast woman, touching a Jewish Rabbi (man) would have been the final straw. She could have been totally removed from society, perhaps killed for this act. This woman, at the total end of herself, saw Jesus as the only remedy. If she could just touch his robe!?*

3. Why does he ask "who touched me"? He was God, didn't he know?

He gives her a chance to respond to Him. He would not allow her to remain in obscurity taking a small part of the gift- healing. She truly needed the secondary part of healing- a faith relationship with Him. Knowing her heart as she admits to touching Jesus, Jesus acknowledges her true Faith.

Commentary: This serves as a strong warning against people that simply “attend church”. There were lots of people milling around Jesus, “attending the event”. Why weren’t they healed? Why doesn’t Jesus stop for them? They were a part of a community wanting something from Jesus. But that is not what Jesus is about giving. This woman has come in faith, not to get a piece of Jesus, but the whole. Do you relate?

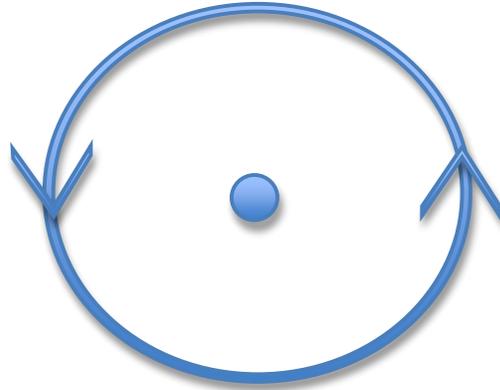
***Exercise:** In the circle to the right, place the following items in the orbital places they take as we remove God from authority.

- God
- Humans
- Creation

Next, put the following items in their proper places of authority.

Where is God in your orbit right now?

We are designed to center our lives around God. When we do so, life, relationships and even our stewardship of creation are in harmony. When we place ourselves at the center, we essentially remove God from his rightful place and we begin to worship our own priorities. Life, relationships and even creation suffer. Pride, greed, fighting and wars are the result.



Leaders: Have the individuals in your group responded to Jesus? He gives them the opportunity but they must respond. This is not a “work” it is simply a response to an open hand. But again, people must respond. They cannot go on having knowledge of Jesus but not respond in faith to Him.

***Notebooks:** Have you admitted your need for Jesus? Not just that you need some help to get good things in life, but that you need Him for true life? If so, write about it in your notebooks. If not write out your desires for Jesus at this point in your lives.

Authority over Death 5:35-43

1. Jesus stopped to address the women. Speculate, why did he stop and not go on to Jairus’ daughter?

Perhaps Jesus is showing that his mission is greater than healing the physical. Perhaps he is allowing Jairus’ daughter to die knowing that bringing her to live would proclaim his authority in even a greater way than a “simple” healing. Perhaps Jesus is wiser than you or I and knew what the situation called for?

Context: There are two stories intertwined here. Let’s bridge the two together with this question. Realize that is happening in the eyes of Jairus. Malpractice! A doctor that does not address the most acute illness first could be sued in modern times! This woman had been sick for 12 years. Certainly she could wait. What would you have been feeling if you were Jairus’ family watching and waiting while Jesus stalled? Furthermore, A Jewish leader is made to wait for a poor hemorrhaging woman! Can you think of a more ironic situation where Jesus puts his view of the KOG on display?

Commentary: *This points us to the truth that we will not truly connect to Christ in a substantial way until we see that our most fundamental problems and needs cannot be met by anything in the world. Let's put this practically. To really connect to Christ by faith, you cannot look to him as a means to a happy family or a good career and status — but as an alternative to them. That does not mean you cannot be a Christian and have a strong family or career! What it means is that a Christian has come to see all the world's resources as utterly inadequate in the final sense. A Christian comes to see that we have been looking for these things to be a "cure" for the subliminal loneliness, emptiness, or sense of inadequacy we feel. Only when we begin to see that nothing in the world really, finally, satisfies at all, can we come to Christ with anything but the right attitude. (Cf. the classic chapter on "Hope" in C.S. Lewis' Mere Christianity)*

2. Why does He say that she is "not dead but sleeping"?

Again, what is on display here? Jesus' authority. Jesus has authority over nature, over evil, over the physical.... Death is not death to Jesus, it is as simple as waking someone from sleep. Nothing is too great for Jesus. The disciples need not fear. Jesus is in control.

3. How might seeing these miracles have changed the perspectives of "messiah" for the disciples?

Would they have slowly started to get it? Jesus as messiah does not mean political domination. It does not mean economic liberation. It does not mean caring more for the externals and less for the internals. It is no rewarded of self-effort or vain conceit. But he is powerful... Yes He is very powerful. He has authority over all of life and the KOG is a kingdom under His rule and reign.

4. How is your perspective of the Messiah growing, changing, developing?

5. What is your motivation to follow the Messiah? What will keep you going?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Section II. Jesus withdraws from Galilee 6:6–8:30

Lesson 7– Kingdom Rejection

[Chapter 6:1–56]

HOOK:

Read the section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- Deep Question: If you were one of Jesus' disciples during his lifetime, how would you handle the opposition to Jesus so far?
- If a great Christian leader was knowingly murdered in the US today, what would that do to your community of believers? Strengthen? Weaken?

Context: Jesus came to establish His Kingdom right? Therefore, don't you expect Jesus to see profound results of healing and salvation wherever he travels? However, in many respects it does not seem to be going that well. One of the factors of the Gospels lending to their credibility is that if you were going to perpetuate a hoax, you wouldn't include many of the stories that are embarrassing to the emergence of Christianity. Jesus' family and hometown reject Him again in this passage. Others will reject Jesus' disciples. Jesus' own disciples seem to take one foot forward and two steps backwards each day. And the great heroes of the emerging faith are being killed (John the Baptist). It would seem at times in Mark's Gospel that in fact he goes out of his way to show us that Jesus' ministry flounders. So let's keep going "immediately" along as Jesus moves out of the region of Galilee towards the great city of Jerusalem.

LOOK:

Not in my house 6:1-6

1. What is the significance that Jesus is mentioned as the "son of Mary"? A Carpenter?

This will offend many of you, perhaps it should. In ancient times it was offensive to call a male child the "son of his mother" rather than son of the father. Joseph may have been dead at this time, but even so, this was a great slight towards Jesus. It was as if to say Jesus was not truly a man! See the irony, Jesus' small town, probably around 200 people, do not think Jesus worthy of any respect. The King of the universe finds no respect from those who knew about Him the most.

Moreover, they mention his occupation. Of course we have all heard that Jesus was a carpenter. But the emphasis of the town was, "How can we believe this illegitimate son, this blue-collar worker. How can he tell us anything of value?" In essence, people expect leadership and power to come in certain packages. Jesus did not conform to their expectations. What are other ironies of the Gospel that don't conform to yours or "the world's" expectations?

2. How does Jesus respond? What is the message He is giving them?

A prophet is one who comes in the name of God. They speak for God. In the OT many prophets came warning Israel, but were disregarded by the people. Jesus here is likening Himself to them.

This generation will not listen. They only want miracles not Jesus. His message then is that ultimately, He will go to those that do not “know” Him. The Gospel is for ALL people, not just the Jews. He has come for the Gentiles as well. He has come for all those reading these words right now.

3. If Jesus handles rejection, what does it give to our ability to handle rejection? How do I answer this question with a Gospel answer rather than a “moralism” answer.

One of the dangers in answering this question in the typical “right Christian fashion”, is that Christianity becomes just moralism. Think about it... What do most people think about Christians in today’s culture? They think that Christians think that they are better than others. They think that Christians are just trying to be good people so that if someone says that they are a Christian, they think that that person is claiming some sort of elite morality. When you ask someone if they want to be a Christian, the response is one of rejection because they are not wanting to follow the same moral code as you.

But that’s not what it means to be a Christian. In fact, I know many non-Christians who outwardly live a more moral life than me. Many religions’ moral systems could put Christianity’s to shame. We must understand this for our own hearts sakes and also to be able to share the Christian Gospel message with others.

A typical answer to the question above might be, “I want to be like Jesus, so I try hard to handle rejection”. That might be an exemplary way to live, but it is not Christianity! The Gospel says, “I can handle rejection because my sense of worth is not dependent on some one else’s acceptance. It is based on Christ’s acceptance of me. God is thus the life-giving source of freedom from others’ opinions of me.” When a Christians realizes that, God becomes the centrifuge of life and so they want to find meaning and identity in Him. This shows the world that God is greater than anything or anyone around me and so God is glorified in the handling of rejection. A Christian doesn’t try to “do like Jesus” but they try to live a life of satisfaction in Jesus love reflecting on what He has already done. As soon as I “try and live like Jesus”, living like Jesus becomes my centrifuge, not Jesus Himself. Do you see that slight perversion? The hero in the story becomes your ability to live up to an ideal rather than Christ alone. The difference is subtle but all-powerful. The first response relies on our own power. The second appropriates the power of the cross that sets us free from performance and self. This is the Gospel’s glorious power of freedom.

4. Vs. 5 is troubling. How do you make sense of this? Wrestle with this, what does it say about Jesus?

Is it that sometimes Jesus lacks power? That can’t be. The Bible tells us that He is omnipotent. He is also omniscient so He knows their hearts. There seems to be something about a person’s heart that Jesus will not violate and force action upon them. This brings up the age-old debate about free will/determinism which I don’t think you need to get into here. The reality is that Jesus initiates with people who are close to Him and He cares much about... but often times they will not listen and He must move on. That is really profound. Honestly its encouraging. Even Jesus doesn’t always see fruit in His ministry. We are not to beg people and cater our message. We are to move on in a spirit of compassion, but also boldness.

Commentary: Most commentators agree with C.F. Cranfield, who wrote: “It was not that Jesus was powerless apart from men’s faith, but that in the absence of faith he could not work miracles in accordance with the purpose of his ministry.” In other words, Jesus did not lack the naked power to perform miracles, but he lacked the proper context for his purpose in miracles. You never see Jesus setting a mountain on fire or writing words in the sky or doing a purely spectacular display of divine power. Obviously someone who calmed a hurricane and raised the dead could do such things. Why didn’t he do so?

The answer (as this text indicates) is that Jesus' miracles were not "magic tricks" designed to prove how powerful he was, but "signs of the kingdom" to show how his redemptive power operates. His miracles always healed and restored and delivered people in ways that revealed how we are to find him by faith and have our lives transformed by him. This is why Jesus made the woman with the blood flow "go public" (5:23-34). He is not just using his miracles to show his greatness, but to show how his kingdom comes into the world and into lives; who he is and how he had come to save. If Jesus saw people who would not believe, even with miracles, he did not do any. Why? He "could" not (due to the character of his mission) do a deed of power that would not redeem!

It is also possible that when Mark says on the one hand that he did "not do any miracles" and yet immediately says that he "laid hands on a few," that he did no public miracles but rather healed some sick individuals privately. Tim Keller, Gospel of Mark study pg. 62

Out on their own 6:7-13

1. If a model for ministry were to be found here, what important things should we notice?

- *Jesus sends out in pairs. Ministry is lonely and community is important to Jesus. Also, there is accountability in both purpose and moral fortitude. Ministers of Jesus must live holy and upright lives.*
- *They take Jesus' authority. It is not on their own strength that they minister. They are fighting with empty guns if they do not take the power of Jesus.*
- *They are to trust Jesus for His provision and not rely on their own forethought and preparedness.*
- *Many will not believe them and they are to prepare for such a situation.*
- *Their message was one of repentance alongside good works. One was not without the other. There was not a primary, secondary level of their ministry to the poor, hungry, sick and dead hearted.*

Tension Mounts 6:14-29

1. Mark includes a lengthy section on the murder of John the Baptist. Speculate as to why he includes this here (remember the purpose of Mark's gospel from the outset)?

Commentary: "It is significant that [unlike the other gospel writers] Mark does not report either the victory of Jesus nor the end of the temptation... his whole Gospel constitutes the explanation of the manner in which Jesus was tempted... The detail, recorded only by Mark, that in the wilderness Jesus was with the wild beasts, was filled with special significance for those called to enter the arena where they stood helpless in the presence of wild beasts. In Mark's Gospel they found that nothing they could suffer from Nero was alien to the experience of Jesus. Like them, he had been misrepresented to the people and falsely labeled (3:21ff.). William Lane

Context: Tensions were mounting, both for Jesus personally in Mark's gospel, but also during the time of writing by Mark (A.D. 60's). The emperor Nero was near mad and had a diabolical plot against the Christians to be carried out just around the corner. Mark was showing his audience that no plans, even by government officials, can thwart the plans of God.

Do what you can't do with what you don't have 6:30-44

Context: Jesus and the disciples are tired. They have been sent out and now have returned talking about all that they had seen the power of God do. Jesus was taking them away to a place of rest in the desert. They hadn't even had time to eat. But many followed. What would you have done? Surely they just wanted to be alone. "Jesus, send them away!" must have been their thoughts. But Jesus "had compassion" on them, (literally, his guts wrenched). So He began to teach. Once again, the teaching of Jesus was of constant importance. But as it grew late, He saw that there was no food

nearby and He must feed them. Five thousand was the number of men present. With women and children, scholars suggest that as many as 20k gathered to be near Jesus. What were the disciples to do?

Notice Jesus was teaching the crowd, but his primary teaching is about to occur with the 12 disciples. After discussion it is apparent that the disciples still don't understand the power of Jesus. How could this be after they had been sent out and done miracles? Mark's use of words here is decisive. In vs. 43, after the crowds had eaten, a remaining 12 basket-fulls were collected. For "basket" the Greek word "kofinos" is used as opposed to "spyris" which is used in the latter feeding of 4000. Mark's point is exacting. "Kofinos" means small, lunch sized baskets, opposed to larger carrying baskets. Jesus had provided the exact right amount for the crowd and also His disciples, only small lunch basket-fulls are left. Jesus knows how to provide. His understanding is always exact, perfect! He can be trusted. Do not think you can do anything on your own, even when you see success (as they had when they were sent out). Jesus can do something with nothing!

1. What further lessons can we take from this story?

- *Once again, Jesus teaches AND heals. The people were in the desert, not unlike Israel in the OT after being taken from their land. Jesus was modeling his care for the soul and the physical. One day Jesus will return to both restore the soul and the physical world. Jesus gives constant attention to physical and spiritual life. They both grip His heart.*
- *Jesus can do the unexpected. He could have sent people into town to get food. He is often more concerned with our growth in faith than He is in simply supplying a need.*

2. What is the application to you and a current situation in your life?

Still don't Understand the Water Walker 6:45-56

Context: There are three times in Marks's gospel that Jesus leaves to pray. Each of those times is in connection to a crisis. Here it seems that after the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, the crowd was likely invigorated to exalt Him to Messianic power.

1. Why does Jesus begin to "pass by" the disciples who are in the wave-rocked boat?

Commentary: First, here we are not made privy to Jesus' intentions, but to the commentary by one of the witnesses. However, Jesus response corroborates the witness' interpretation. Jesus responds to the disciples' question of his identity saying, "Don't be afraid, for I AM." This is the name God gave Moses when he revealed himself in the burning bush. Also, when Moses on the mountain asked to see God's face, God says, "No, but stand here and I will let my glory pass by (Exodus 33:19). Thus by saying "I AM" and passing them by, he shows he is the Creator God.

2. What lessons are we to learn from the storm at sea?

The disciples still did not get it. Do you and I get it? Do we really understand, trust and follow Jesus? Are we only enthralled with His power to do temporal things or are we convinced of WHO He is?

3. How do the people's response on shore also confirm the message of the story?

The people followed him. They even beat him there, (the lake was only 4 miles wide). But they only seem to be interested in Jesus' healing. He was a spectacle, not a savior. People wanted to use Him. They did not want Him!

Leaders: Press in here. What do they want from Jesus? Do they want to experience what He gives them in the form of a good life, safety, morality, feeling good about them selves? Or, do they want Him? The "I am"?

4. Who is this Jesus? He feeds people miraculously. He walks on water and calms a storm. Yet he is not even welcome in his hometown and constantly rejected. This man is full of irony. Yet the greatest irony is coming "immediately". The God King will suffer on a cross. What are the many ironies of Jesus' life so far? Express some of the beauty of this God-Man Jesus as you encounter his intriguing character.

***Notebooks:** If you are a Christian, why? Why do you follow or want to follow Jesus? Share with the group. Do you see any tendency in you life to use Him rather than know and worship Him?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 8– Kingdom Heart

[Chapter 7:1–37]

Context: *The problem in Jesus’ day was that the Pharisaical, self-righteous leaders began to add to the law. They imposed additional legal restrictions to protect people from violating the actual written law. These additional laws were called “hedge laws” and were meant to deter people from coming any where near to actually breaking the written law. But in another sense, they added laws in order to maintain a measure of safety for themselves. They religiously explicated duties to follow that would ensure that they would never need forgiveness for breaking any written law of God. They essentially attempted to become their own saviors.*

Up until now, the disciples have been observed breaking the oral law twice. They failed to fast (2:18) and they failed to observe the Sabbath (2:24). Jesus’ men are now observed eating with “unclean” hands. This was not that they were literally “dirty” with dirt and grime, but that they had not done the ceremonial washing or wetting of their hands. Jesus is confronted, attacked by the Pharisees (the zealous rule followers) with the question, “Why don’t your followers walk the walk”? The greater question underlying their attacks was, “how can this be the messiah if he does not conform to the Jewish system?” Jesus responds to their attacks with characteristic wisdom and shows them that He has not come to follow the law as they understand it to be laid out, but He has come to fulfill the law as the true Messiah.

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- Deep question #1: What is the greatest problem with humanity? What is your greatest personal problem?
*To answer, draw two pictures- one representing the world’s greatest problem and one for your greatest problem. (I know, corny, but I think it will provide a good discussion reference!)

LOOK:

The Heart of the Law 7:1-23

1. What is Jesus’ accusation towards the Pharisees using Isaiah’s words (vs. 6b-7) as a whip?
2. What is Jesus’ argument using the 5th Commandment, “Honor Your Father and Mother”?

Context: *“Corban” literally means “offering or oblation”. In its most unblemished form it means an offering that reflects the love and consecration of the offerer. It reflects God’s command to offer sacrifice as an outward reflection of an inner reality of the heart.*

In Jesus’ day the term had come to mean anything that was “consecrated” to God. The Pharisees began to declare gifts that were to be given to one’s parents as “corban”. Selfishly they knew that if something was declared corban, it would not be actually given to one’s parents because it was then “consecrated” to God. However at the same time, the corban item need not be given to the temple for “God’s use”, but could remain in the use of the giver. It therefore remained in the use of the giver without actually being given away to the parents or to the temple. In this practice, Jesus was saying that it actually nullified the 5th commandment of God and simply served to benefit the children or giver. It was a twisted way of keeping gifts by calling them “God’s”.

Therefore, though outwardly following the letter of the law and calling an item “corban” it was simply self serving and was a gross violation of the heart of the Law. Jesus was calling a spade a spade and rejected the appearance of righteousness to the degradation of heart righteousness.

3. Though we tend to be negative towards outward observance of the Law in today’s modern “grace filled teaching” Christian life, why was observance of the law...particularly the cleanliness laws of the OT helpful? Why do we need to consider the meaning of these laws today?

They give us a visual picture of “dirtiness” vs. “cleanliness” which is very important to understanding the Gospel. The OT law declared some things unclean and forbidden for the people of God. If one was deemed unclean, there were rituals to be observed to make one self clean again before one could go to worship God. These cleanliness laws gave innate understanding that there was a need to be cleaned before one could gain access to God. For example, the Jews did not eat pork. Pigs are unclean animals by nature as they wallow in the mud and scrape their bellies upon the earth. Therefore God declared pork to be unfitting for consumption by the Jews. He was giving them a picture of cleanliness vs. dirtiness. The community of Israel learned that God required one to be clean to meet with Him. Of course none of us are totally clean (of the heart) and so we need someone else, namely Jesus, to clean us. The law was set up as a physical demonstration of a spiritual reality. In the OT one could clean them selves in ritual ceremony to approach God. Today, Christ cleans us by his death ceremony so we do not have to try and clean our selves, which we could not do anyways.

Today we have lost any sense that we are in need of cleansing by God. We avoid the weight of sin in our lives by declaring that we are not responsible. Our sin is due to our upbringing. We are a product of our environment. There is no true sin because there is no right and wrong. With no true guilt, what we experience is shame and we must simply reject shame because it is just an emotional construct. In fact, today, sin is seen as a psychological tactic by the church to control people into conformity. Therefore there is no need of cleansing by God and all we need is to re-train our minds out of a regressive religious dogma that has dominated western culture. Then Nietzsche becomes a prophet, indeed “God is Dead”. We don’t need God. We certainly don’t need to be forgiven. As long as we are better than the person next to us, we should feel fine about ourselves. Christ is irrelevant!

4. Deep Question #2! In what ways do our souls get dirty? What are the consequences?

5. What sort of ways do we/you add to God’s law in order to self-protect? If you really think about it, sometimes we even try to avoid our need for God by following these rules.

ie. What are disciplines in your life that can seem like good things you do for God, but looking deeper they stem from trying to feel safe, or earn God’s approval?

***Leaders:** There is a huge issue of performance in the Christian sub-culture. Indeed in our culture at large and we import it into our lives whether professing Christians or not. All of us have added to God’s desires for us in subtle and not so subtle ways in an attempt to make our selves feel good about our relationship with God. Again, this can be both for the Christian and the non-Christian. When non-Christians try to do “good” things, they are responding to the law of God on their hearts. We all have an inner murmur to be “right” with whatever we perceive as ultimate “rightness”. The Christian believes that the ultimate rightness is God himself.*

***Leaders:** Get after peoples’ hearts here. What are the false constructs that people follow in order to earn God’s favor. What are the self-salvation projects? Where have people become their own saviors?*

Some of the obvious laws we use to protect ourselves are for Christians: don’t drink (even of age), don’t miss church, don’t miss a day reading your Bible, always pray before a meal, go on mission trips, volunteer for every service opportunity that comes up, don’t cuss, and share your faith all the time.

For both Christians and non-Christians: do good things, help others, serve, etc. Don't miss my point! I think it is Jesus' point actually! These are all good things. They can draw you near to God by obeying His will. But can't we do these same things with a wrong motivation which can lead to them actually being an offense to God? (ask this question, what do people think?) I can read my Bible every day with discipline but actually I am just trying to feel safe before God so He does not disapprove of me. I can share my faith with someone who does not know Christ but actually I can be trying to earn some sort of special favor from God. On and on..... The great but terrible thing is that God sees the heart and not just the action. If God sees the heart, then I really need help to be honest with you. How seldom do I really follow Christ for His sake and His glory. So much of my world is wrapped up around my own benefit and my own glory. It is not wrong to follow God with discipline. Certainly we should do that. But beware of trying to get God to be on your side or approve of you because of what you do for Him. This exemplifies a heart that is actually far from God and Jesus rebukes those people in this passage.

6. How can a person “honor God” (worship God) but have their “hearts are far from Him”? This question is a bit like #5 but you have to get what Jesus is accusing the Pharisees of here. Someone say it in just a bit of a different way here in response to this question as opposed to #5.

***Optional**, read the parable of the Two Sons in Luke 15:11-32

- How does the older brother falsely honor His father?
- When the younger brother returns, why is he so angry?
- What is the lesson about the heart of “obedience”?

7. What makes a person unclean? vs. 14-23

8. What is sin (defilement) according to Jesus' teaching? (Vs. 13-23) After answering on your own. Discuss the commentary below.

Commentary:

a) vs. 7:13 – *Sin is breaking God's commands, not human customs or cultural conditions. Jesus refers to “the word of God” as the standard for judging sin. So sin is never judged by popular opinion or by the changing mores of culture but by the absolutes of the Bible. (cf. Romans 4:15 – where there is no law, there is no sin. Or I John 3:4 – sin is lawlessness.) Notice that some of the sins in Jesus' catalogue are in our day socially unacceptable (like murder) and other things that are today almost applauded (like pride “arrogance” and “lewdness”).*

b) vs. 7:20 – *Though the “ceremonial law” (see “You eat Pork Don't You”) of the Old Testament was provisional, the basic moral law — the 10 commandments — are still used as a standard. Jesus' catalogue of sins follows the so-called “second table of the law”, the commandments which have to do with loving our neighbor.*

6th commandment – “thou shalt not kill”

- “Murder” v. 21 is the actual action of physical harm.
- “Slander” v. 22 is to put people down with words and do character assassination.
- “Malice” v. 22 is simply the motive of ill-will toward another.

7th commandment – “thou shalt not commit adultery”

- “Sexual immorality” v. 21 is a word that refers to any sex outside marriage.
- “Adultery” v. 21 is more specifically unfaithfulness toward one's spouse.
- “Lewdness” v. 22 means a whole mindset of sexual impurity which leads to an immoral life.

8th commandment – “thou shalt not steal”

- “Theft” v. 21 is to unjustly usurp another's rights over his/her possessions.
- “Envy” v. 22 is resenting others for having what you do not. It is wishing not only that you had it, but that they would lose it.

9th commandment – “thou shalt not bear false witness”

▪ “Deceit” v. 22 means deceiving or misleading anyone, robbing them of the truth they deserve.
10th commandment – “thou shalt not covet”

- “Evil thoughts” v. 21 refers to a general attitude of self-pity and discontent with the limitations of your life. It is a whole stance toward life, and as such, it leads to violence, impurity, theft, and dishonesty.

1st commandment – “thou shalt have no other gods before me”

- “Arrogance” v. 22 means setting yourself up as your own god, living for your own glory (self-aggrandizement), determining what is right or wrong for you (self-will).
- “Folly” v. 22 is paired with arrogance here and elsewhere in the Bible because pride is so self-defeating. Arrogance is folly because it is childish and unwise. Together these two traits create a rooted attitude of stubbornness and self-centeredness: “nobody tells me what to do”. The basic attitude of the heart is to want our own way (Isaiah 53:6).

c. vs. 7:20 – We also learn here that each commandment is not only against certain behaviors, but also root attitudes and motivations. Sin is a disposition of the heart, not merely overt actions. The catalogue of sins Jesus gives us mixes up actions (murder, theft) and motives/thoughts (malice, envy). Every act of murder has sprung from malice, so malice is the acorn and murder is the tree. The whole tree was originally in the acorn. God is every bit as concerned with the inside as the outside.

Therefore, for any deed to be “good” it must

- a) be conformed to God’s law, and
- b) be done from the heart for the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31 – whatever you do, do all for the glory of God).

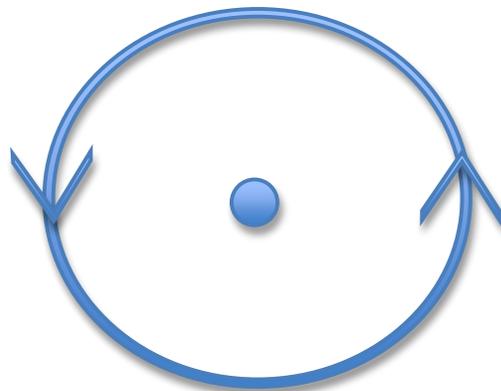
So a sin is not merely a deed that fails God’s standards, but any motives that fail as well. If at any moment we are failing to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, we are sinning (Matthew 22:37) for that is what we owe him. This is why Isaiah 64:6 can say that even “our righteous deeds are filthy rags”, because our hearts are never right.

d) vs. 7:14-15 – Sinfulness arises from inside, our natures primarily, not from the outside, how we are treated. Modern belief is that people are naturally good, and if they do evil, it is because they have been oppressed by society or warped by their parents, and so on. But Jesus clearly says, we sin because we are sinners, NOT we are sinners because we have been mistreated.

e) vs. 7:23 – Sin makes us “unclean”. We are all unfit for God’s presence. We cannot save ourselves.
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***Exercise:** Reflect back on this diagram.
How would you define sin using the concepts we looked at last week?

- God
- Humanity
- Creation



Gentile and Jewish Faith 7:24-37

Context: Men were not allowed to speak to a female in public, much less a Rabbi to a female. At first His response seems like a rejection, however it is an opportunity to lean in and discover her heart.

1. What was so significant about the woman's statement to Jesus (vs. 27)? Who are the children? Who are the dogs?

She got it! She had heard Jesus message, not just his powerful healing, but she had heard and believed His words.

The "children" are the chosen ones of Israel. They are the Jewish nation to whom God gave his special covenantal relationship. But they had categorically rejected Jesus (even in His hometown). The "dogs" are the Gentiles. This woman was a Gentile and in her belief she was proving her response true. She would believe even though she was not part of the original chosen nation. Ironically, Paul in Romans will tell us that she, along with all other believers in Christ are now the chosen nation, the people of Israel. No, not ethnically, but spiritually speaking we have been adopted into the family.

2. How does this story explain the Gospel?

It is not about being Jewish, or Gentile, significant, or insignificant, righteous on the exterior or tainted on the interior, Jesus comes after all and asks us to "repent and believe in the Gospel". (Vs. 1:15) The Gospel is free. It defies social and religious standards. In fact, most often it is the weak that understand their need for God rather than those that hedge their bets by their performance. This is the great ironic message that Jesus, the King, the Messiah, came to bring.

3. How do these final two stories sum up the chapter?

Jesus offers salvation freely for those that will hear. Even the "deaf" are not out of his reach. When we realize that we are all deaf to Jesus but that He has saved us, our natural response is to tell others the great news. The woman here was bold because she believed in Jesus' great mercy. The deaf man and His friends were bold because they realized how much Jesus cared and how great He was. Jesus makes people clean. We are all in great need of being cleaned. Our culture is hurting and in despair. What they really need is to be clean before Jesus. What great news that it is not up to our moral effort nor our own cleansing of our motivations. Jesus solves the greatest problem of humanity.... That problem is not "out there" but inside every human heart, even yours and mine.

Discuss this quote:

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?" — Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956

Notebooks: According to this section, what is the Gospel? Why do we need the Gospel and what does the Gospel do?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 9– Who is the King?

[Chapter 8:1–30]

Context: *The consistent image we encounter is that of Jesus and the twelve crisscrossing the lake from east to west in order to avoid the ever-increasing crowd. The Galilean ministry is nearly over. Jesus will later return to this area only in secret (Mark 9:30)*

Now, Jesus, still in the area of the Decapolis, has spent three days teaching in the open air. The crowd is a mix of Jews and Gentiles. Mark tells the story of the second miraculous feeding in strict parallel with the first. Scholars who claim only one feeding miracle occurred base their position on the assumption that the Gospel writers confused one story for two. But we have two distinct stories, two different locations, two different crowds and most especially, two completely different miraculous outcomes. Michael Card, Mark: The Gospel of Passion

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- Try and put your knowledge of Jesus up to this point on hold for a minute. If you were to invent your own Jesus, Son of God, King of the Universe, what would he do, be like, look like?

LOOK:

Another Feeding 8:1-21

1. Notice the similarities and the dissimilarities between this feeding of 4000 and the previous feeding of 5000 (6:30-44)

2. Come on... We just saw this same miracle in chapter 6. Who are these disciple guys? Are you serious, they didn't remember that Jesus was the guy who could make bread and fish multiply? How does this happen again?

Again, probably not a story you would include if you were trying to make Jesus' followers look good and build a religion upon their shoulders. Mark includes story after story of the bumbling foolery of the disciples. But his purposes are calculated. The world must know that it is not by human wisdom or strength that Jesus message would prevail. The world must see the contrast of Jesus' greatness and the disciples' inadequacy. Jesus must be the hero. Peter would be called the "rock" but even the rock must have a greater foundation underneath his feet.

3. Think back, what are all the stories you would NOT have included if you were Mark and trying to fuel an emerging religion? What does the inclusion of these stories do for the credibility of Mark?

If you were trying to perpetuate a hoax and create your own religion in some attempt to control people, why would you include all the stories of the disciples' inadequacy? Scholars in opposition to the validity of Christian faith simply cannot answer this question with any force. There is no other religious teaching that includes such stories of bumbling and apparent inadequacy of its principle disciples. It is quite a strong argument that this is actually what happened and not made up trickery.

4. Remember that in the feeding of the 5000, the Greek word used for the remaining baskets was “kofinos” or small baskets and the one used here is “spyris” or large baskets. Why? What point could Mark be trying to make as he leads up to the questioning of Peter, “Who do you say that I am”?

He screams at them through the two similar feedings of the crowds. The first time he showed that He provides exactly what is needed. This time he shows that he provides in abundance. No matter the situation, no matter the need, Jesus is adequate for the situation at hand. He is showing the incomprehensible power of the Messiah. He rules and reigns by serving the needs of the people with precision.

5. Is there an area in life where you need God to provide for you now? Be honest with your group. We all need someone to gain healing from a disease in our remote family and that may be a pressing need for you. But think personally, where do you need God to provide for you personally right now? Do you believe that He can provide for you?

6. In Vs. 11-21 Jesus seems to be outwardly frustrated. “He sighed deeply”. “Do you not see?” Do you not hear?” What was it that was so vexing to Jesus at this point?

The people’s eyes and ears were not linked with Faith. They wanted a sign but He knows that not even with miraculous signs (he has been doing them hasn’t he been?) will people apply faith to what they see. Faith is the missing component. People need to see and hear with their hearts, not just their bodies.

Eyes Gradually Opening 8:22-26

1. Does anything surprise you about this scene?

At first, Jesus tries to perform a miracle similar to that of Mark 7:33 where he heals a deaf man. But here it doesn’t seem to work at first! What is going on? “He looked up and said, “I see men, but they look like trees, walking””. His eyes were partially healed but not fully. His sight was slowly being restored. Jesus touches his eyes again and he could see clearly. The disciples were also slowly beginning to see. They saw a dim glimpse of who Jesus was. Now would come the true test. Jesus would ask them to open their eyes fully to see the Messiah.

Notebooks: Draw a picture of an eye that represents your eye’s “openness” to seeing Jesus rightly. How did you draw it? (I know, you have to use your left side of the brain in this study sometimes!)

You are the Christ 8:27-30

Context: From Bethsaida the disciples strike out north to the area of Caesarea Philippi, twenty five miles distant....it could not have been more different than the village that they had left behind. Caesarea was a thoroughly pagan area. Herod the Great had constructed a temple for the worship of his patron, the deified Augustus. Next to this temple was the cave of Pan and its temple. Pan was a mythological creature, a satyr with the legs of a goat and the body of a man. He was worshipped as a god of the shepherds and the mountains. In time there would be a temple to Zeus in the same complex.

It is as if Jesus intends to lead the Twelve into the heart of paganism to ask them this supremely important question. Amidst temples where an emperor and even a goat are revered as gods and worshipped, Jesus asks, “Who do people say that I am”? Michael Card Mark: The Gospel of Passion

I said at the beginning, Mark “immediately” moves us forward to the ultimate reason for Jesus’ arrival on earth. We have been climbing a mountain and here we come to the first peak. From this vantage, we will be able to view the great peak still before us. The most famous three days in all time will soon be upon us. Though there is a greater day to come, this is one of the great moments leading up to the final announcement to the world of Jesus’ identity. Here Jesus alone with his disciples directly and without hesitation asks, “Who do people say that I am?” And to Peter, “Who do you say that I am?”

1. If Mark were to end his gospel here with this climactic scene, what view of Jesus would you get so far? Speculate, what is missing?

So far Jesus has taught us about the Kingdom of God. He has challenged our devotion to religious behavior vs. His calling to follow Him. He has modeled to us great compassion for others. But soon, we will see that the Messiah not only triumphs in teaching and in authority, He will triumph by suffering the ultimate sacrifice. He will call us to die along with Him if we are to follow Him. He will say that the road to greatness is a road of suffering. Jesus will show that He is the teaching, compassionate, suffering servant.

2. Do you want to follow Jesus as Mark has revealed Him so far? Why or why not?

Notebooks: If Jesus were to ask you, “Who do you say that I am?”, how would you respond? Write out all the things you would tell Jesus about who He is. Are there areas that you can admit you might be potentially blind to or not even want to see? Share with the group.

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Part II– The Suffering of the King 8:31 – 15:47

[Emphasis on the mission, suffering and death of the King Jesus]

Section III. Journey To Jerusalem 8:31 – 10:52

Context: The pace of the suffering servant on to Calvary quickens here. Emphasis shifts from the crowds to the teaching of Jesus' disciples and the suffering of Jesus. Jesus was sent here to die. That is the direction of his whole life. Following Jesus means death. Following Jesus means humbling of oneself and serving others. We enter into his death. 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34

Jesus predicts his death	8:31	9:30-31	10:32-34
The Disciples misunderstand	8:32-33	9:32	10:35-40
Jesus teaches on the cost of Discipleship	8:34-38	9:35-37	10:41-45

Lesson 10– The Beginning of the End

[Chapter 8:31 – 9:32]

Context: The first great peak in Mark's gospel has been reached. Peter has proclaimed Jesus as the "Christ" (Greek) "Messiah" (Hebrew). Like the blind man of 8:22, they see dimly. Does Peter even know what he has said? 8:30 ends with Jesus strictly telling the disciples to tell no one! Wasn't that the reason he was discipling them? Wasn't it for them to tell others? The problem was that they knew just enough to really mess things up! Jesus begins to focus intensely on their development. He must teach them what the Messiah is and does.

We have already talked about the misunderstandings of "Messiah" in Jesus' day. There were actually many different expectations of the Messiah. To some, he would be a glorious king who would sit upon a throne in Jerusalem and establish a theocratic rule over a re-established nation of Israel. To others he would be a military ruler who would come and overthrow the Roman ruling empire. All the views had one common denominator. The messiah would come and bring glory, honor, victory, power and freedom from oppression for the Jewish people. Most notably, the Messiah would come in strength, might and rule. He would never come to suffer, face defeat or in service of the oppressor.

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- Summarize, what has happened so far in Mark's gospel?

Watch #3: <http://www.history.com/shows/the-bible/videos/the-bible-recap-hour-7>

LOOK:

The Son of Man Must Suffer and Die 8:31-9:1

- Vs. 8:30 holds one of the most ironic statements in the Bible. Speculate why I suggest that?

Commentary: The Greek word for “must” is “Dei”. That means exactly what it means in English, “MUST”! What do you mean that Jesus MUST die? It does not say he “could” die, or “should” die, or “will” die, but must. This is theology 401 here I have to warn you.

God never does what is 2nd best. In fact he can only do what is first best. There is no other option for a holy, perfect being. He is the greatest being so the first best thing possible is for the greatest being to reveal the extent of his greatness by being more fully known. (slow down and think about that one!) The first best in the whole universe is for God to make himself truly known as He is. Therefore, for God to receive the most glory in the whole universe, Jesus must die in order that He would be seen as He truly is! It was therefore not plan “B” that the fall would happen and Jesus would be sent to save the world by dying. He had to send His Son so that He would get the glory for saving the world and be shown as the greatest person in the whole world. Jesus MUST die! What an irony.

Furthermore, Jesus MUST die in order make right what had been wronged. That is, when we turned away from God (all of us have both ontologically in Adam and experientially when we first violated God’s holiness in heart or action), we were separated from God and his holiness required a payment for our forgiveness. You might suggest that God could simply have forgiven us. Why did He need Jesus to die? It’s actually fairly simple. When something is broken, you cannot just say, “I forgive you” without a price being paid for its restitution. If one forgives you, they still pay a price of pain or heartache in order to let you off the hook. If you break my car and I reply, “I forgive you” it does not change the “brokenness” until one of us pays to have it fixed. So Jesus had to die in our place to rectify the situation if we are not going to be required to die. Now Jesus simply asks us to respond to His death and thank Him for His payment and repent of turning from Him. Once again, Jesus MUST die!

2. Speculate: what does “Son of Man” mean? Look at Daniel 7:13-14 from where it is most likely derived by Jesus. Why would Jesus use this name?

Commentary: “Son of Man”

- It is used 81 times in Gospels. It is Jesus’ favorite expression of Himself though it is not used by anyone else than Jesus.
- It contains the combination of eschatological (future heavenly) glory with suffering and death.
- “Son of Man” was preferred by Jesus because unlike “messiah” it was not riddled with misunderstanding and thus the inherent potential to miscommunicate his identity was lessened.
- It contains the emphasis of Jesus “humanity” coming as its son to the earth.

3. This is the first of three announcements where Jesus states that He must suffer and die. Why has he waited until now?

Probably the disciples were not able to hear this until now. Actually, Peter still can’t comprehend as we see in his response. But now that Peter has declared his understanding that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus will teach them what the true Messiah is and does.

4. Why does Peter rebuke Jesus? In 8:29 it seemed that he finally got it. What does this reveal about Peter’s heart?

Wow, you don’t want to be Peter here do you? Jesus rebuked him and said, “get behind me Satan”. Not what you want to be known for. Peter was an honest and emotional man. He said what was on his mind. This would make him a great leader. It would also make him a man that needed to apologize and repent. Peter’s heart was thus soft but also easily stirred. Is your heart stirred by the provocative teaching of Jesus or do you remain ambivalent?

Peter wanted Jesus to be the Messiah on his own terms. When Jesus revealed that the Messiah would suffer, that did not fit in with Peter’s plans. We want Jesus on our terms too don’t we? Peter

had his own ideas about what it would mean to be a follower of the Messiah. Probably fame and prestige were at the forefront of his mind. Jesus does not accommodate what we think He should be. He will reform our hearts to see Him as He is rather than what we arrogantly think He should be.

5. Vs. 8: 34-9:1 contain a description of a true Disciple. What are the qualities?

Denial of Self- *He does not mean to deny oneself of something. He means to cease to make oneself the center or object of life. Really this is what it means to be a Christian. When we sin, we put ourselves at the center of life removing Jesus from His rightful place. When we first become a Christian, we repent of this action which takes place at a heart level. Christ comes into our life and displaces our “self” from the central location. This takes place at a spiritual, positional level. But we our “self” is still alive and so by nature we usurp Jesus’ role at the center. To be a true disciple means we continue to repent of our daily “re-taking” of the center of life and relinquish control to Jesus*

***Notebooks:** *Draw a circle and put Jesus in the center. Now put “self” on the outside of the circle. Draw arrows rotating around clockwise on the circle’s edge. This is how life should be lived. This is how we were created to live. Now put “self” in the interior of the circle next to Jesus. This is the battle that takes place at a heart level. We usurp His authority. If you are a Christian, He is the ultimate center of your life. However this does not stop the battle for control of your life. If you are not a Christian, “self” still reigns in the center of your life. You simply need to repent and turn your heart to Jesus and ask Him to take the center position by forgiving you of your sin against Him. He will come in and take his rightful place and begin to restore a right positioning of your heart and mind.*

Taking up the cross daily- *This does not mean dealing with daily discomforts. It means to take the way of the cross in life. The picture is of a man already condemned carrying his cross on the way to the place of execution. To bear the cross is to follow Jesus into the hard things in life. It may mean to stand up for your faith amidst disagreement or misunderstanding. It may mean to forgive someone something that is difficult to forgive and take the weight of that sin upon you. It may mean to initiate with someone in a relationship that needs mending. It may mean to take disciplinary measures into an area of sin.*

Faith Grows 9:2-13

1. When coming to many of these stories, it is always a good question to ask, “Why”? Why do you think this section is here? Why does Mark record it and why does God do it? Remember, what is to come for Mark’s audience and what is Jesus preparing the disciples for? Speculate...

Commentary: *Peter records this event in his own letter, 2 Peter 1:16-18 ESV-*

[16] For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

A veil has been momentarily lifted for the two disciples. We must understand that this was after Peter’s confession. This revelation is not what caused them to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter had already shown that understanding as feeble as it may have been. Jesus is only building progressively their understanding of what they have admitted in faith. The disciples’ faith is what Jesus is committed to developing.

It is not that Jesus changed forms “transformed” but that He shows his beautiful reality, “transfigured”.

Mark’s audience and Jesus’ disciples were on the road towards suffering. Pressure was mounting for both. Jesus does what we all want Him to do... reveal Himself visually in His glory. Yet don’t miss it. The disciples will still deny Him in time to come. They still needed faith. Jesus could show up to us

right now and we would still find reasons not to believe. The second half of Mark's Gospel is Jesus' building of the disciples' understanding of who this Messiah is. But there is never a point where faith is not required.

True Faith (If you can?) 9:14-29

Commentary: This is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. It shows Jesus great compassion and power as a man begs for Jesus' help. I think it is one of the most clear pictures of what it means to have faith in Jesus in a way that I can relate.

1. Why were the disciples not able to do anything?

Jesus tells them that prayer was necessary. This is an obvious answer to the question above. But the greater answer is just a bit deeper. Remember, the disciples had been given authority to do such things. They had gone out and seen success when they were sent two by two. Now they were not able to. This is speculation.... But I wonder if they had grown accustomed to a formula for God's work. They knew what words to pronounce, what posture to take. But they had forgotten their need for faith in God and not themselves. Perhaps they wanted to impress the crowd with their works. Perhaps they wanted to impress Jesus as he returned from the mountain. I relate if this is the case! I can perform for others and God without actually trusting in God.

2. "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." What a profound statement. What are the implications of Jesus' words?

It is not Jesus' power that has potential issues. It is our belief in that power that is lacking. Remember, Jesus is building faith into the disciples. He is probably saying this both for the disciples to hear and the father. Faith is the requirement. But don't dismay for your lack of faith. Jesus is about the business of building our faith. What if we approached life like that? In all situations, Jesus' main concern is to build our faith. If we believe that, we wouldn't look at hard times as besetting but as helpful in our development of faith in Jesus. That would totally change our outlook on life.

Context: Can you imagine what this father must have been feeling? His child had been suffering since birth. As a father I cannot imagine what this must have been like. I would be desperate for his healing. When Jesus said the requirement was "belief", "Immediately" he cries out, "I believe, help me in my unbelief"! What a statement. His natural, passionate reaction was to "cry out" (some manuscripts add "in tears") either way it is a cry of desperation, total inability to do anything by him self, he recognized his utter need for Jesus. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This is what it means to be a Christian! It is not the amount of your faith, it is the quality of the one in whom you have faith. Jesus is worthy to take your cry for help. Without crying out, you will never get Him. He is who we really need.

Notebooks: Has there been a time in your life where you have cried out to Jesus for help? Share....

Suffer and Die, A Second Time 9:30-32

1. Why were they afraid to ask Him what it meant?

*Were they beginning to understand that He was serious about this suffering and dying thing? Were they beginning to understand that things were going to get hard for them? There is a growing sense that this is not all fun and games. Being a disciple has great joys now and to come, but there is a road of suffering that keeps getting mentioned. The "Cost of Discipleship" is not trivial and we like the disciples need to recognize and be aware. *The "Cost of Discipleship" is also the name of a book written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and well worth reading on this topic.*

2. If Jesus asked you to suffer for Him, what would be your response?

3. How would you endure suffering for Jesus? What would be your motivation?

Didn't Jesus suffer everything for us? In some ways, if you are truly a Christian, (Christ follower), how would you not suffer? To be a follower of Christ means to follow His path. His path was to suffer. Suffering lead to His greatness. Someday there will be greatness for us and it will be achieved on the road to suffering. This motivation sounds superficial, but Jesus and Paul both give it to us. There will be great reward in heaven for those that suffer well.

The great news is that Jesus already suffered for us. The pressure is off. Our relationship with Him is not determined by our faithfulness to suffer for Him but by His faithfulness in suffering for us. Again, this is the Gospel. Jesus has suffered all so that we CAN suffer for Him. Though at the same time our relationship with Him is not determined by whether we suffer well or not. What a relief. The pressure is off. The motivation is NOT, Jesus suffered for me so I have to suffer for Him. The motivation is that Jesus suffered for me so I am set free from being measured by my suffering for Him. He suffered faithfully enough where I would never suffer faithfully enough. Now, I can suffer because He already did it all for me. He sets me free and we joyfully suffer for Him.

Notebooks: Are you afraid to ask Jesus any questions for fear of His answers?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 11 – Following the King

[Chapter 9:33–10:52]

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- What are the different ways that people respond to Jesus in today’s world when confronted with who He says He is?
- What are the healthy and unhealthy ways that you respond to Jesus in your own heart and actions when you are confronted with who He is and why He came?

LOOK:

They Still Don’t Get it 9:33-41

1. In 9:33-37 we have one of those situations where the author, Mark, if he were trying to perpetuate some sort of hoax about the person of Jesus and Christian faith, would not have included this! Can you believe that Peter even told Mark about this so he knew about it and could write it down? In antithesis to what they believed the Messiah would come and do, what does Jesus reveal about this Messiah’s kingdom?

The KOG is one of servant hood and meekness. Our culture does not recognize these qualities as positive. Dominance and control are the true values of our culture. But Jesus does not agree. Service and meekness are not qualities of weakness but strength of character. They are powerful displays of Jesus’ command to deny oneself and take up the cross.

***Notebooks:** write a list of the character qualities that Jesus has displayed. Write a contrasting list of the character qualities that our culture values.

2. What sort of heart might the disciples’ question come from in 9:38-41?

It seems like they are not concerned with the great things that were happening in Jesus’ name, but that they were concerned for their own control over Jesus power and potentially the fame that came from wielding that power. Notice that it explicitly states that they saw someone casting out demons “in Jesus’ name”. The glory was going to Jesus and not this person. The immediate question that comes to my mind is what do I do in my heart when I see others succeeding while I am not? Do I rejoice for others the way I would rejoice for myself? Thoughts?

Fiery Warning 9:42-50

Context: Jesus’ attention turns back to the child in His arms. His voice may have darkened and his eyes intensified. He is mindful that His “little ones” will come under attack of temptation.

1. Jesus is obviously using hyperbolic language in this passage. List the warnings and consequences.

2. What are “hand” sins? What are “foot” sins? What are “eye” sins?

Commentary: *It might be interesting to typify these three categories. However Jesus’ emphasis is probably not the actual type of sin, but rather to give emphasis to the priority of dealing with sin severely. Jesus hates sin. Sin leads to hell! Sin is what is leading him on to Jerusalem. He is going there to deal with the very sin that he now warns against. He hates what it does to his little children and what it will cost His father.*

“Gehenna” is the word used here for “hell”. It was a place outside of Jerusalem where trash was burned coinciding with the prophecy, “the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched”. Jesus used this descriptive place to describe hell in a way that could be pictured and understood. Scholars agree that most likely hell is not a place of fire and worms. They also agree that most likely it is worse! Gehenna was simply a very descriptive, reprehensible place Jesus used to create a mental image. He must have used it to help people understand and sense the horrors of hell.

One of the corollaries to this teaching of Jesus is that Hell is evidently a real place. In our culture this is seen as one of the great anathemas to Christian teaching. How could a good and loving God create a place called “hell”? What are your responses? How do you rectify Jesus teaching on a real place called hell which and the reality that He loves His creation so deeply? For an in depth discussion on this topic I would refer you to “Erasing Hell” by Francis Chan. Also, the message found at: <https://vimeo.com/25464440> by D.A. Carson

3. Salt is a preservative. It makes things last. It keeps things alive. What does it mean to “have salt in yourselves”? How might you lose your saltiness?

Salt keeps meat “alive”. In antithesis of the death of hell, Jesus exhorts to stay “alive”. Avoid sin and follow God.

The King’s Kingdom 10:1-31

Context: *Here it becomes clear that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He crosses over to Judea beyond the Jordan. Though all that reminds Him of home is behind Him. He is now on to new territory, on the way to Jerusalem. The familiar crowds are there. But while the Pharisees have lurked in the shadows for a while, occasionally asking questions about Jesus and the law, they now engage Jesus head on.*

The Root of Sex, Love and Marriage 10:1-12

1. Jesus’ response to the Pharisees in their intent to trap Him on the issue of divorce is very interesting. He chooses to give a much more foundational response than to simply answer their narrow question. What is a model that He gives us in answering hard questions today?

Commentary: *It is God that defines reality, not us. In our current culture, God is put on trial while we judge Him. Here Jesus puts their understanding of God on trial and judges their interpretation. If they understood God and His design, they would not ask such maligned questions. It is impossible to answer some of the culture’s questions without building a foundation from God’s perspective of the nature of reality as He has instituted. The only alternative is to deny God’s existence and become a reality unto our selves. Jesus chooses to side-step the particular issue knowing that an answer to their question specifically will never hit the questions that they really have at a heart level. They are seeking to avoid God’s kingdom and build their own.*

His answer is that God designed everything. Though they think they have better, more sophisticated answers to life, they are inadequate if God really did design the universe. For if God designed the universe then He knows how it was designed and how life and relationships ought to be lived. Of

course IF there is no god... there are no "oughts" and anything goes. But if there is a God, then His design is perfect and will end up for the best of His creatures.

If God designed marriage, it is not a simple agreement between two individuals, it is a covenant promise instituted by God. It is two humans of opposite sex becoming one mystical union of one flesh AND soul. This is difficult to comprehend. But if this is true, it is not something to be entered into and taken out of based on one's own will. It is the mystical union between two souls for life.

But there is more. Why does marriage not continue on into heaven? We will not need marriage in heaven! Marriage is a temporary institution to help us understand the complete "one-ness" that God has designed for He and us. It helps us understand the nature of a covenant relationship made by a choice to love one-another. The ultimate marriage is between God and us for all eternity. The Pharisees here are way off on their understanding of God's design of the universe.

Here, Jesus admits that Moses pronounced a law for divorce, but that was only due to the fallen nature of our hearts. It was not God's original intention. In the KOG God is restoring his original intention for life. If God's intention was for the two to become one by covenant choice, not by some romantic feeling and that choice is to be entered into for life, there is hope for marriage, it is God-ordained! God will give power to marriage as two become one and center their lives on the foundation of life giving power- the Love of Jesus. Here is the power of marriage- If Jesus loves us so much, we are freed to love one-another. We are freed from seeking another to reciprocate love to us because we have already received the greatest unconditional love available. Thus, when two people know Christ's love intimately and then make Christ the center of their affection, they are freed up to give one-another unconditional affection. This is the mystery and power of the Gospel and what Jesus is teaching is the foundation for the KOG.

2. Say out loud in your own words, what is the foundational way that he answers their question?

My father designed life. He designed relationships. He did not create relational institutions to fit into our schemes of reality. He created reality to match His schemes of life. He is the designer and we must find out how He designed the world and live accordingly if we are going to find out what real life truly is.

3. The Pharisees were really asking a much bigger question than a simple argument on divorce. They may well have asked: Who are we as humans? What are we here for? What is the design of life? That is why Jesus answered them on a foundational level. What are other questions that they might have posed to Jesus if they asked them in today's world that are really much deeper questions?

- *Same sex marriage?*
- *Pre-Marital sex?*
- *Pornography?*
- *Guilt/Shame*
- *Success*

KOG 10:13-16

Context: *The Pharisees came to Jesus in pomp and arrogance. As the crowd brought children to Him, He must have seen their needy eyes. Not unlike the Pharisees, the Disciples rebuked them for not observing proper protocol. Jesus sets them all straight by addressing the humility needed to enter the KOG.*

Treasure Jesus 10:17-31

Commentary: In opposition to the Disciples' and Pharisees interaction with Jesus, this story is of a man who sincerely comes to Jesus for humble answers. "What must I do to inherit eternal life"?

1. His question is sincere, but it is flawed. Why?

First, he addresses Jesus as "good". His intention is a sappy compliment but he does not know what he is saying. Jesus to Him is a "good" moral teacher. Jesus is more than that!

Second, his erroneous view of Jesus leads to his next error. His question is asking what "good" work he must do to get eternal life. If Jesus is just a good moral teacher, He can simply give the man a list of good things to do.

2. How does Jesus respond?

Isn't it interesting? He knows this man's heart. He knows that indeed he is a moral man, but his heart needs probing. Jesus "loved him" and yet did not lessen the requirements of the heart to enter the KOG. He loved him by telling him the truth of his heart. Unless he would give up his true idols, his wealth, his heart would never belong to Jesus.

This is a powerful example for us today. Some would say that if Jesus loves people, He would accept anyone. But if you really love someone, you don't allow them to go on in error of their ways. If you love someone you warn them of danger. There is danger for us if we do not submit to the KOG. Far from being a "keep the peace at any cost" man, Jesus' love is challenging and demanding. So we too ought to speak truth in love appropriately today.

***Notebooks:** What are some questions Jesus might ask of your heart to determine if you desire the KOG?

Suffer and Die, A Third Time 10:32-34

Context: This is the third time that Jesus makes mention of His impending death and also the most detailed and poignant. They were now decidedly on their way to Jerusalem and it is declared by Mark for the first time. The disciples along with Jesus have been part of a steadily growing crowd making their way to Jerusalem for the yearly Passover feast. Jesus again tells them about what is to happen. Mark makes it quite obvious that they still do not understand. Fear is beginning to surface in their hearts. It's hard for us to comprehend that the disciples don't hear Jesus' words clearly still at this point. Yet, as so often I have stated, we need to put ourselves in their position. They were with the Messiah King. They anticipated that Jerusalem would soon fall to His reign. This suffering and death Jesus was talking about was not in the disciples' plans at all. They wanted to reign with this king.

***Notebooks:** Are there things that you want the Christian life to be about that Jesus would say, "it's not about"? Is fear keeping you from following Jesus in any area of your life?

The Son of Man Came to Serve 10:35-52

Context: Jesus knows who will be on His right and left while He hangs on the cross outside of Jerusalem. It would not be a privileged position! They still have the wrong value system. They sought glory in a way that true glory would not be obtained. The glorious position comes only through suffering.

1. Reflect on what James and John ask of Jesus and His response. They were hearing Jesus constantly talk about whom He was and what He came to do. Now they show their total lack of understanding! However, I find this very encouraging to me as well. Why do I say this?

They were so close to Jesus in proximity, but they needed Him to reveal Himself in time. They were utterly dependent on Jesus to open their eyes. There was nothing coming from themselves that would suffice to give them divine wisdom. Therefore there could be no pride or arrogance in their place with Jesus. From the beginning, He initiated with them to simply come and follow. He would lead them to a response as they encountered Him. What great relief to see that Jesus is in control of the divine insight that we need. He is in control of opening our hearts and minds. We need to ask Him to do so more and more, but ultimately our job is to respond rather than create some sort of experience with Him.

2. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”. We are to serve in the way that Jesus served... death to our “self”. Are there ways in which Jesus is calling you to serve and “die” for Him? (Remember, it is not out of a desire to earn something from Him, but rather as a humble sacrifice for all that He has earned for you.)

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Further study on Hell by Tim Keller:

a) Jesus characterizes hell as “fire” (vv. 48-49). Instead of just reacting in disgust or distress, we should think of how apt this image is. Fire disintegrates. Fire is painful. Sin, Jesus says, leads to “fire.” In other words, sin leads to disintegration and misery. Many people ask, “do you believe in a hell with literal fire?” The good news is that this language is surely metaphorical. Real fire eventually consumes its fuel and goes out. But this fire can’t die (v. 48). So we are not talking of physical fire. The bad news is that this “metaphor” is therefore referring to something obviously worse than physical fire. It is talking of spiritual disintegration and misery. Anger, greed, envy, hatred, guilt — all these things begin to disintegrate body, relationships, community, and spirit even in this life. Hell is simply the misery and disintegration that sin brings on now extended out fully and for all eternity. Thus hell is a fact, even if we must say that the “fire” is a metaphor.

b) Secondly, Jesus tells us how we should handle sin in our lives. Sinful behavior (the reference to hand and foot vv. 43-46) and sinful desires (the reference to the eye-v. 47) must be shown no quarter. Sin, Jesus is saying, is like a fire that has broken out in your living room. Let’s say a cushion on couch has ignited. You cannot just sit there and say, “well, the whole house isn’t burning — it’s just a cushion.” If you don’t do something immediately and decisively about the cushion, the whole house will be engulfed. Fire is never satisfied. It will just take more and more.

It is the same way with sin. The drastic image of amputation (cutting off a foot or hand) means that we must be ruthless about sin. There can be no compromises. It must not be tolerated. It can’t be allowed to smolder, it can’t be confined to a corner. It will engulf you eventually — which is hell. We must confess sin and change and do anything to “put it out” — for the “fire” of sin’s misery could eventually envelopes us and goes on forever. Sin never stays in its place. It always leads to hell, first in this life and then in the

next. (Probably, the terrible image of amputation is also telling us that we must be willing to even deprive ourselves of something dear in order to avoid sin.)

c) v. 48 seems to mean that hell is an everlasting condition. Thus the consequences of sin are infinite. Someone will conclude that Jesus' use of the doctrine of hell is harsh and unappealing. But if I don't know about hell, I don't know all Jesus took for me on the cross. Over and over we are told that the Messiah will take our punishment (Isaiah 53). If I don't know the magnitude of the penalty and debt, I won't know what he has done for me. Therefore, ironically, without a belief in and concept of hell, I can't know the depth of Jesus' love. Anyone who doesn't believe in hell usually does so because they say, "I don't believe a loving God would do that!" In that case, what price did Jesus pay for our sins? Not a lot — just 3 hours of physical pain. But if this is the penalty we owed — eternal agony — then on the cross Jesus would have taken on something infinitely greater. Ironically — if you deny the doctrine of hell to make God more loving, you make him less loving. You have lost the Biblical truth that Jesus experienced hell itself for us voluntarily.

d) The statement in v. 50 — about "having salt in yourselves" is a puzzle. Salt in those days was an important preservative. It kept meat from decaying, it kept things intact. Any meat without salt was going to disintegrate. "Saltiness" would thus be the opposite of disintegrating fire. Notice too that "have salt" and "be at peace" are the same thing. So Jesus is probably summing up this entire passage. He is exhorting them to be humble and avoid sin. He is urging them not to fight over position and status, but to be more concerned to serve others and spread his kingdom. (Here I am just guessing!) Tim Keller, Study on Mark pg. 119

Section IV. Jerusalem Ministry 11:1–13:37

Lesson 12– Battle in Jerusalem

[Chapter 11:1–12:44]

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- How would you describe the Kingdom of God at this point?
- What ironies are present in this section? Why does a king ride a donkey? Why does Jesus get angry?

***Read:** Zechariah 9:9-13

***Context:** Here begins the last chapter of Jesus' life. He enters the great city of Jerusalem. Thousands of pilgrims were also entering to celebrate the yearly Passover feast. Passover commemorated that great day when God spared Israel from the angel of death and set them free from the captivity of Egypt. Jesus would enter Jerusalem as the true lamb whose blood would soon be shed to set people, Jews and Gentiles truly free.*

In order to fully contemplate the significance of these two chapters we need to think on the history here culminating.

At the beginning of it all, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were removed from the "sanctuary" of Eden. Flaming swords and guards were placed at the entrance. This seems to signify that only through one who could give access would anyone be able to return. However, not only were Adam and Eve cut off from the physical place of Eden, but they were also cut off from God spiritually. Spiritual death- separation from God arrived in their souls.

As history progressed God gave Israel special "sanctuaries" of worship since immediate proximity to God was barred. The "tabernacle" was a portable sanctuary for Israel's constant movement and upheaval. This was the physical place where God's presence resided.

Later, when David was allowed to establish a more permanent kingdom, God gave Salomon the task of building a permanent sanctuary, a "temple". Finally, Israel had a permanent place of worship where the one true God's presence resided. However, subsequently that temple was destroyed and the nation was again taken captive. Moreover, though structures for God's presence were a temporary solution given by God, there was a greater, more permanent presence of God that was needed.

During the captivity, Ezekiel prophesied that there would be a new temple and a new king that would build it (Ezekiel 37:24-28; 40-43). This temple would be much greater than the temple of Solomon. God's Glory would fill it and it would be so large that all the nations of the earth would fill it. (Ezekiel 37:28) But where was this temple? The temple of Jesus' day, built after the captivity, was NOT as glorious as Solomon's temple. Where was this great temple? Where was God's glory? Where was this king that would build this great temple?

The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-12 is crucial at this point. He tells of a King riding into Jerusalem upon a donkey's colt. He then says that the Holiness of God will come into the whole world. (Zechariah 14:20-21) God's holiness would be everywhere. This meant that the king will not come and establish a new physical temple where God would specifically reside, but the new King would

establish a temple that has no boundaries, God's presence would be everywhere. So... Jesus now comes, not to build a new structure, but to open the very door back into the presence of God as was available in Eden. John tells us "the word became flesh and "tabernacled" among us and we beheld his glory". (John 1:14) After Jesus clears the temple he says that His body is the temple. (John 2:19-21) Jesus will be both the door and the very temple of God.

Now... Jesus enters Jerusalem, the city of the great temple. He walks around the outer portions and his anger rages as vendors are turning the temple into a commercial plaza. He warns Israel through the fig tree. He warns the Jews against rejecting the King. He proclaims who is the true King. He proclaims that He is the true Lord. The temple of man would be destroyed but a true temple would be available for every man and woman's heart. The King has returned and the presence of God is available once again through a King that would die to repair the damage done at the beginning of the world!

Here the famous "Palm Sunday" events occur. Jesus was led on the young animal in triumphal procession while palms were laid at His feet. In ancient times, if a king had conquered a city, he would ride in on a white horse symbolizing he was coming to judge and conquer. If the king approached on a donkey's colt they knew he was offering terms of peace.

Here Jesus comes in benevolent triumph. Though we must beware to not over embellish the scene. Thousands upon thousands of tired pilgrims were entering the city. Some certainly recognized Jesus and showed him honor upon His arrival. "Hosanna", "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". However, Jesus' entry certainly did not come with great attention and overt significance. Luke 19:41 tells us Jesus entered in tears. Here came a lowly teacher from the corner of the world, Galilee. He rode into the greatest city of the time ready to conquer sin by suffering the ultimate price.

LOOK:

Mad at a Fig Tree? Anger #1- 11:12-14, 11:20-25

1. Seriously, what is going on here? Why is Jesus mad at the tree?

Context: During this time of year, the fig trees of the region had small little buds that would appear. These buds were edible and would precede the coming of actual figs. Travelers would often snack on these almond size growths. Here Jesus sees such a tree, goes to find the buds but finds nothing. This tree is barren. It is not producing the type of fruit that it should produce. It is malfunctioning and not carrying on its proper role.

This scene sets up a theme for the coming chapters. The Israelite nation was God's chosen nation. He made a special relationship with them extending back to Abraham. They were his chosen, special people. But where was their fruit? Where was their love for God? Where was their acknowledgement of the Messiah's return? The Jews constantly rejected Jesus. Who would turn and believe? Here, we have a righteous and holy anger. Jesus pronounced a curse on the tree that reflects his emotion toward the chosen people of Israel. How long would He put up with them!?

2. What does this scene tell us about Jesus?

Two things: Many including UNC's own Bart Ehrman, tell us that Mark tells the story of an angry spiteful Jesus. They say that this Jesus is not the righteous, holy Jesus that we have imagined but rather a man with deep flaws and is far from being "sinless". However, Mark's intention is actually quite different as He reveals Jesus' emotion. Jesus indeed has emotion! He gets angry. He reacts to the environment and does not go around as a disinterested ghostly apparition.

Secondly, there is an anger that is righteous. If we hold fast to the Bible's teaching that indeed Jesus did NOT sin then what Jesus displays is not sinful, spiteful anger but rather holy, compassionate anger. This is an anger of compassion against the sin of God's chosen people. Why is there no fruit

in this nation he asks with passion? We should hear this being an anguished scene of fatherly discipline for a wayward son, holy, righteous and pure.

Mad at the Temple Salesmen, Anger #2- 11:15-19

1. Here Jesus gets angry again. He doesn't express it verbally but you have to picture the scene with Him "driving out" buyers and sellers of the temple courts. Why is he angry in this situation?

Context: When it says that Jesus entered the temple, it probably means the "outer courts" of the temple where salesmen sold items to sacrifice for worship in the temple. Thousands of people bought and sold animals for the Passover sacrifice. Josephus tells us that in one week of Passover 255,000 animals were sold. There was actually nothing wrong with this as it was a legitimate need for those traveling to the city. However, the outer court was a place God had reserved for Gentiles who seek God. It was a place where Gentiles (those of all nations) could go to pray and seek understanding of the true God because they were not allowed inside the temple proper.

So this was the place where non-Jews could come, pray and contemplate the reality of the Jewish one true God. The pagan unwashed gentiles could come and seek God. Here was God's special place reserved for those outside of the Jewish covenant to seek and experience God. And there, Jesus found money changers, animal salesmen and no quiet for contemplation. In other words, Gentiles were being kept from God.

The salesmen had taken over this place of prayer for their own gain. It was done at the expense of the "nations" of God... the gentiles here. The vendors were in error of preventing outsiders from coming to God in a meaningful way. It shows that the vendors were only concerned with themselves and not with others knowing God. They were preventing access to God!

2. Mark sandwiches this story in between two sections talking about that fig tree. Why do you think he does this?

Context: Authors of this day often used "bookends" to highlight areas of emphases. Here, the temple passage is between two bookends formed by the story of the fig tree lending to an emphasis on the commonality of a theme being communicated.

Probably, Mark is using the cleansing of the temple as an immediate "case in point" of the lack of fruit in the Jewish people. They have the form of godliness but miss the whole point. Their hearts are far from God and Jesus has righteous anger from their rejection of God.

3. What does this section teach us about Jesus?

Jesus hates sin- rejection of His father as king. He is not a king that says, "let's let bygones be bygones". There are real consequences from God for turning away from Him. He is a holy king of the universe and demands allegiance. In particular, keeping people from knowing the true God receives God's holy anger. Beware of rejecting God in such a way that keeps others from knowing Him.

4. What are the applications from chapter 11?

First- what does it say about God's intentions? God has sent his son to give access to all people. All nations have access back to God. God has made a way to return to the Garden of Eden. God's heart is for all people to know Him. He will not force all to worship Him, but He wants a way for all to return. Yet our turning away from God, (sin) can keep others from coming to Him. His grace towards others can be thwarted by our own sin.... Wow! What things, situations, people, places in your own lives keep others from seeing the reality of Jesus?

Jesus cleans the temple. What things might he want to clean in our hearts? Jesus wants fruit in our hearts. What might be preventing the growth of fruit in our hearts? (what causes fruit to grow?)

Slumlords 12:1-12

1. “They perceived that he had told the parable against them.” Wow, really perceptive! (sarcastic) Of course He told this parable against them. It doesn’t take someone with ESP to realize this. Who are the characters in this parable and whom do they represent?

*A vineyard owner (God)
Tenants (Jews)
Servant #1 (prophet)
Servant #2 (prophet)
Servant #3 (prophet)
Many other servants (prophets)
A beloved son (Jesus)*

2. What are the actions of each of those groups? Who are you in the story?

3. What happens in the story? What does Jesus tell it?

***Notebooks:** Before you write this story off and move on in disbelief of how anyone could kill the servants... and the Son himself... What are the patterns in your life that have actually killed the Son!? Maybe you killed Him today even... In fact, yes you have. I have! We all have. What do you need to hear from this parable?

Failed Trickery 12:13-27

Context: Here we are introduced to three separate groups of people; all are out to trick Jesus into giving reasons for His rejection. First the Pharisees and Herodians approach Him with a question on money. The Pharisees, who we have met before, were the religious conservatives. The Herodians were those that followed the new Roman political regime and were the progressive liberals. Here you have the conservatives and liberals, not friends in most contexts, both coming together to attack Jesus.

Second, we meet the Sadducees. They were Jewish aristocratic leaders. They held a larger percentage of leadership than the Pharisees. Yet, as they were wealthy and thus removed from the common man, they were actually less influential. They profoundly disagreed with the Pharisees on many issues. One of the foundational teachings was that there was not, nor could there be a resurrection from the dead since they denied a spiritual world. The Sadducees regarded Jesus as a theological conservative along the model of the Pharisees and so try to pose a question that would confound the conservative teaching of the Bible and make Him and it look silly.

The basic question here, though muddled to us given our lack of cultural understanding, is: “Whose side are you on Jesus? Are you a conservative Jew or a Liberal Roman sympathizer? Have you come on the side of the Jews, or are you going to continue in the way of the Gentile?”

1. What do you learn about Jesus in these sections?

Jesus is wise beyond comprehension. He knows the scriptures. (btw- this is not supernatural knowledge, he studied the scriptures just like you and I must). Opposition does not intimidate Jesus. He handles them graciously and wisely and also firmly.

2. What questions might people ask today that come from a desire to expose the failure of Jesus and the Bible to answer hard questions? (Some might come from a liberal camp. Some might be posed from the conservative camp.)

3. How does Jesus answer the questions and what is a model that Jesus gives us towards answering those and other questions?

Commentary:

Taxes to Caesar- This questions intimates the Christian's response to government and other societal systems. Jesus says that it must not be a rejection of their importance in an appeal to some sort of "spiritual" higher plane. Jesus, in this whole section, has been advocating His authority. 11:27-33, 12:1-12 both give us this context. Therefore, one might expect Him to say that King Caesar holds no authority because God has all authority. However, by advocating the paying of taxes to Caesar, Jesus implies the right of government to rule. This would be great news for a person who believes in strong government influence over societal life! However, He also tells them to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". In other words, don't let God's role be replaced by structures and systems that are human. Don't let government, the economy, wealth and health be what you serve. Those that advocate for loose government control might like this. In the end, Jesus is neither a conservative nor liberal politically. He would say that the world's structures have their places, but they are limited. God is higher than all and holds all things together. Therefore, do not worship Caesar. Obey Caesar and worship God.

The impetuous to us here is firstly to not be trapped ourselves into making gods of our ideologies. Do you hope in a human system to rescue us? Or as Jesus, do you pay proper respect to the systems, but acknowledge that a system of society is a poor God. Furthermore, when questions and opinions related to politics and societal systems arise, do you get trapped by the argument itself? Or do you see the bigger picture? Far too many Christians argue about secondary issues to the point where the central issue has lost the ability to be communicated.

Jesus here gives a much more nuanced response than polarizing the sides with a black and white response. How do we in today's age move people to the Gospel rather than argue about periphery issues, none of which will deal with the foundational needs?

Resurrection of the Dead- Jesus tell the Sadducees that they don't know their Bibles and that they don't even know God! What a great point to remember for us today. When people say things about the Christian faith, quite honestly most of the time they are simply ignorant statements. Most of the time it is simply that they have been told a misconstrued view of what the Bible tells us of what God thinks. Moreover, many people's questions or statements come from an inability to understand God's heart because God's heart is not in them. A Christian needs to respond in gracious realization of these two realities. Jesus graciously but firmly tells them that their understanding is flawed and then goes on to explain more clearly their mistake.

The impetuous upon the Christian thus is to firstly know our Bibles. Do you know what the Bible says about the issues that people raise today? Furthermore, we must believe that it is God's power to change and not ours. That does not absolve us from engaging in the questions, but it means that we cannot argue someone into agreeing with the Bible's view on life. We must be prepared to give answers but must do so with a gracious compassion and ultimate understanding that it is God's power that the world needs.

The Great Commandment 12:28-34

Context: The “scribe” represents a profession. They were specialists in interpreting the scriptures. They were religious leaders and given a good amount of authority. Here a scribe seems to ask a genuine question. He is impressed with Jesus’ wisdom and so asks a difficult question. In the first century the Jews listed 613 separate commandments of the Law. It was said that the prophet Amos reduced them all to one central command. Here it seems the scribe is asking Jesus to do the same thing.

Jesus responds with, with Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (vs. 29). This is the central creed of Judaism and is called the “Shema”. Indeed it is the foundational doctrine of monotheism. He follows with Leviticus 19:18 (vs. 31)

In Jesus’ mind the two are inseparable. “The Lord our God is one”, “Love your neighbor as yourself”. You could summarize with Cru at UNC’s motto: Encounter and Respond! Jesus is saying that knowledge of God leads to action of loving others. When you realize who God is and how much he loves us, then it is natural that you love one another in selfless abandon. The religious people wanted an ultimate law to guide and follow. Jesus’ response shows that it is not the letter of the law that should motivate one’s obedience. Obedience stems from understanding the heart of the law that points us toward loving response to God’s great character.

***Notebooks:** Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. How would you put these two statements together in your own words?

Temple teaching 12:35-44

Watch out Scribes 35-40

Commentary: Jesus now poses a back to the scribes. He refers to Psalm 110 (the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament). There King David prophetically refers to “his Lord” who we now know was Christ, the Messiah. However, the scribal tradition attributes the Christ as the son of David according to other prophecy. This is strange Jesus says... which one is it? How could any human be David’s Lord but also his son? And that’s just it. There can be no human who fills both these roles but the scriptures teach them. So then David is either wrong or this Christ is one who will come as a supernatural being. He will be more than a military, political conqueror. Jesus is expanding their vision of the Messiah. Here before them Jesus claims is the one whom they are awaiting....

True Faith 38-40

1. Why does Mark put this story here?

Like usual, Mark has a message he is preaching and he puts stories in specific order by which to communicate his point. Imagine Jesus sitting people watching outside in a courtyard. Here is a story that screams out Jesus’ upside down paradigm. The rich, considered blessed by God because of their wealth were shown to have it all wrong. The poor widow giving out of her poverty showed the heart of the law as he preached to the scribes in vs. 28-31. The rich are the example of lack of faith while the poor widow the opposite.

2. What should be our response?

***Summary-** Jesus would some day destroy the temple... but the temple was not the physical temple that stood before them in Jerusalem. The temple was Himself. He was the very presence of God. But then this temple would rise again in three days. This is glorious news. It is the culmination of all of history. Humanity was originally removed from the temple garden of Eden. Angels were placed guarding the return. Israel carried around a portable temple as they traveled. Finally, two different

temples were built over time where only Jews could go in and worship. But the true temple... the true presence of God has now come and His temple was broken and then rebuilt.

At the very same moment He died, the curtain in the physical temple that separated people from God was miraculously ripped in two. Jesus' body broken in pieces broke the wall that separated people from God. Now there is free access through Jesus. Now ALL have access to God. Now we not only want to know Jesus and follow Him, but His very person of the Holy Spirit comes inside you and I... the temples of God... so that He changes us not from the outside, following duty and law, but from the inside, following the voice and power of Jesus. This is truly great news and will soon unfold in this Gospel of Mark.

3. Final question: Based on all the above, How does a person change to be more like Jesus?

Commentary: First, we have to be honest. We are probably more like the money-changers and salesman in the temple courts than we are like Jesus. Most of life is lived out of a passion for our own gain. "Oh no", you say. "I really try to live for other people". Ya, ok, maybe you do, but then I ask, "why do you live for other people"? Is it so that you will feel like you are doing what is right? Is it that it makes you have peace about being a good person? If that is your motivation, whom are you living for? Think about it. Be honest. We are all in an inescapable predicament, around and around we play the game trying to justify our core value of love of self.

The first step I think modeled herein is to admit with Jesus that we are in the wrong. If you have not turned towards His face, acknowledged your selfish foundation and asked Him to forgive you for the first time, that is the beginning of a faith relationship with Him. I know it is not in good taste to say in our culture, but we have all offended God and He is not ok with that. The penalty for our lack of "godlikeness" is death. Someone has to pay that price. He offers to pay it for us, but we must agree.

Second, once Christ has forgiven our sins, past, present and future by our acknowledgement of what He accomplished on the cross for us personally, then we need to grow in that knowledge. But it is not "grit your teeth" and try really hard from here on out. It is growing in what we have already said we believe. When you come to the person of Jesus in Mark's Gospel, let Jesus overwhelm you with his beauty, wisdom, passion and love for you. Understand all that this King did so you could be a part of His kingdom. Understand that because he died upon a tree, the tree of life was made available for you. Understand that as His body was ripped open, so the curtain that separated the presence of God from the people was also ripped in two. You are given access to God! It is nothing that you could have done for yourself. It was all what He has done for you.

It is from this place that you can finally start to really change. Your whole system of motivation changes. Now, you want to do good but not ultimately for yourself, but for the King who brought you by grace into His kingdom. You can't repay Him for what He has given you, but you can obey Him and so worship Him in your obedience. We are no longer trying to prove our own worth and value by being a "good" person. God has declared us "good" and we live the life that is written on our hearts out of freedom for others and God. We are free! And Freedom changes us. Freedom is only found when we live according to the design for which we were created. We were created for relationship with God and when we find Him, we find life.

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 13– The End is Near

[Chapter 13:1–37]

HOOK:

Watch #4: <http://www.history.com/shows/the-bible/videos/the-bible-recap-hour-8>

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Context by Tim Keller: There is little consensus among Christians with regard to the details of what the Bible teaches about the “end times.” (The theological term for this area of inquiry is eschatology.) On the one hand, we must remember that the basic teaching of the New Testament on this could not be clearer: Jesus Christ will return visibly and personally at the end of time to judge and renew the whole world. There is very little disagreement about this fact among those who accept the basic trustworthiness of the Bible. Some estimate that almost one quarter of the New Testament is devoted to proclaiming this fact. If you reject the concept of the Second Coming of Christ, you essentially have to reject the reliability of the entire New Testament. Jesus is coming back.

But on the other hand, beyond this essential teaching, Christians with very similar commitments and beliefs have not been able to agree on most of the details regarding the Lord’s return. One reason for this is because much Biblical prophecy comes in a literary genre often called “Apocalyptic.” Every literary genre comes with its own set of interpretive rules. We do not interpret poetry the same way we interpret history. But what are the “rules” for interpreting prophecy? “Apocalyptic” looks seductively like simple historical narrative, only written “ahead of time.” But it is also much like poetry in its images and ambiguities. In short, it is very difficult to understand Biblical prophecy. (When we see how New Testament writers interpreted Old Testament prophecies about the birth of Christ, we see just how tricky such interpretation is. For example, see Matthew 2:14 citing Hosea 11:1 as a prediction that Jesus would go to Egypt. Would you have ever interpreted Hosea 11:1 as a Messianic prophecy if Matthew hadn’t explained it?)

What does this mean? First, it means we must hold any of our convictions about eschatology with a certain amount of tentativeness and humility. If we hold our views of prophecy and end-times with the same assurance and conviction with which we hold our views of Christ and the Gospel, we are simply giving ourselves too much credit. What makes us think that we are so much wiser than most of the rest of the Christian church? (Any particular view of the end is virtually a minority position — that is how fractured the church is over the interpretation of details!)

Second, however, we should not simply avoid any discussion of details. Our views here do have some impact on how we live our lives in the world. Our “eschatology” (as we shall see) can make us either very optimistic or very pessimistic about life in this world, and that affects how we spend our money and our time. Therefore, we should study this subject with humility, but we should study it.

The occasion for Jesus’ discourse is his prediction that the temple will be destroyed. The temple was an impressive building. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us each stone was approximately 37 feet long, 12 feet high, and 18 feet long. Therefore, when Jesus says “not one stone will be standing upon another,” he is predicting an extremely violent event, and a tremendous disaster. We know that this prophecy came true. In 70 A.D. the Roman army under Titus destroyed Jerusalem. He raised the Temple to the ground, as a “lesson” and warning to all rebels. This is quite important background knowledge for any readers of this passage.

Ask:

- This is both a hard passage to understand and also a bit scary. What questions does it raise and what apprehensions does it pose?
- What are your general thoughts about the afterlife? Does it motivate you? Scare you? Confuse you?

- If you were truly certain about eternal life with God being the place of being for a believer in Christ, how would it change how you live now?

LOOK:

The Signs 13:1-37

Context: Jesus and the disciples head out of the temple towards the relative calm of the Mount of Olives. As they walk they see the massive stones upon which the temple was built. Some of them weighed more than 100 tons! The greatest stones in the Egyptian pyramids were only 2 ½ tons! These fishermen from Galilee are in awe. They have never seen anything so majestic. They proclaim the beauty to Jesus. Jesus listens... pauses perhaps. Then he leans in. He tells them a secret; all these stones will be thrown around and dashed to pieces... The disciples are in a state of wonder of what men have made. Jesus will soon cause them to be in a state of wonder about something, someone truly glorious.

Tell us Jesus... vs. 3-13

1. What are the “signs” that Jesus gives?

- *False messiahs*
- *Wars and rumors of wars*
- *Earthquakes and famines*
- *Persecution*
- *Gospel preached to all nations*

Context: All these things do happen in leading up to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Five major earthquakes took place. There were three great famines during the reign of Claudius. In A.D. 69 a time of political upheaval occurred in Rome during the “year of four emperors”. Acts records two arrests and trials of Jesus’ apostles. Finally, in A.D. 70 the great temple is indeed destroyed. It was destroyed so fully that we now do not know with certainty where it was exactly placed. But in 13:7 Jesus says still, “the end is not yet”.

In 13:14 Jesus turns to talk of specifics. The “abomination of desolation” is a confusing set of words. There are several possibilities as to its meaning. The phrase comes from Daniel 9:27 and was first fulfilled in 167 B.C. when Antiochus IV placed a statue of Zeus in the temple of God. Jesus’ use may refer to when Titus will set up altars in the temple area to offer sacrifices to pagan Gods prior to its destruction in A.D. 70. Some believe it refers to A.D. 68 when the zealots anointed a deplorable high priest named Ananus. Finally, it could refer to an “end time” event when the Antichrist reigns. Whatever the case, it will not be a good time to be on earth. He tells them to be aware and watch for the signs.

To help in understanding this section, it could be that Jesus is talking on two different planes simultaneously. There is at once both an earthly physical reality to the events described. But at the same time there is a spiritual reality to the “temple’s” destruction and the great judgment day that will come at the “end times”.

Watch Out 14-37

Context: Jesus earlier gives an answer to “When will these things occur”? Now He answers, “What will be the signs”? His language now takes a turn. It becomes apocalyptic rather than describing earthly events as previous. He speaks in prophetic language about the sun and moon, clouds and winds. One answer was cataclysmic but earthly, the other universal.

1. This is no human talking to the disciples! Mark shows Jesus' humanity loud and clear, but do not make the error of believing that He is simply a man. The Bible's teaching is that Jesus is both 100% man, but also 100% God. He never gives up one to be the other and vice-versa. This is a profound mystery. Why must this be true of Jesus? What are the implications if He does not remain fully both?

If Jesus was simply a man... or not fully God, how could he take on the sins of the world? If He was simply a man, humanity's sins would not be against Him and so He could not rightly pay for those sins. Sin is against God by definition and so God must pay for those sins if we are to be set free. In other words, if you harm me, my friend cannot forgive you for me. Your damage is against me and I am the one that suffers the consequences rather than my friend. Furthermore, if Jesus were not God, how could He raise from the dead? Only God can raise from the dead and bear the sins of the world.

Secondly, if Jesus was just God and not human... or not fully human, how could He have lived a perfect life without sin in our stead? In other words, if He were simply God, He would have no possibility of sin and so a sinless life would not mean anything other than God being God. The fact that Jesus was human means that he suffered temptation and pressure just like you and I so that His perfection was as a human in the place of our human lack of perfection. Jesus, in His humanity earned what you and I could never earn in our humanity.

Do these explanations raise 1000 more questions... they should. This is complex deep theology. For a much more adequate answer, refer to John Piper's article at: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-can-jesus-be-god-and-man>

2. What indications do we get about the circumstance of Jesus' return?

3. Jesus will return: Personally, Triumphantly, Redemptively, Justly and Unexpectedly. Where do I get those from in this passage and what do they mean?

- **Personally-** vs. 26 (they will "see" the son of man coming) The return of Christ will be a literal event! It is not some spiritual allusion. Jesus will return and be seen.
- **Triumphantly-** vs. 26 (power and glory) The first time he came, it was with suffering and humility. The second time will be quite different. He will not veil his glory any longer. What a terrible, wonderful day.
- **Redemptively-** vs. 24-25 (the powers in the heavens will be shaken) This will be no merely physical nor merely spiritual return. It will be both. He will come "in the clouds". Not "through the clouds", but in a physical realm that will shake the heavens and renew all things. He will redeem the world BOTH physically and spiritually. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. (Rev. 21:1)
- **Justly-** vs. 27 (His angels will gather His elect) There really are those that will be saved and those that will not. Justice will be served. Though justice is not seen as a positive thing often in our culture, especially concerning the things of God, Miraslov Volf who lived through the Balkan wars has a startling perspective:

***Commentary by Miraslov Volf:** My thesis is that the practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine vengeance... My thesis will be unpopular w/ many in the West... But imagine speaking to people (as I have) whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned, and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit... Your point to them — we should not retaliate? Why not? I say — the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God... Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that god refuses to take the sword... It takes the quiet of a suburb for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence is a result of a God who refuses to judge. In a scorched land — soaked in the blood of the innocent, the idea will invariably die, like other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind... if God were NOT angry at injustice and*

deception and did NOT make a final end of violence, that God would not be worthy of our worship.
Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

- **Unexpectedly-** vs. 32-33, 35 (see question #4)

4. What are the implications of 32-37? How should we take this section and what should our response be? What does it tell us about Jesus?

Commentary by C.S. Lewis: “The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung down at any moment... Therefore, precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments... What is important is not that we should always fear (or hope) about the End but that we should always remember, always take it into account. An analogy may here help. A man of seventy need not be always feeling (much less talking) about his approaching death: but a wise man of seventy should always take it into account. He would be foolish to embark on schemes that require twenty more years of life; he would be criminally foolish not to have made his will. Now what death is to each, the Second Coming is to the whole human race... the whole life of humanity in this world is precarious, temporary, and provisional.” C.S. Lewis “The World’s Last Night”

Context: There is something more going on than Jesus simply answering questions about His return in this section. People throughout history have and will continue to speculate and disagree as to what exactly the signs mean. We may error if we get hung up on the specifics and ask questions that the text doesn’t intend to answer. Remember- Jesus followers were headed into a time of increasing persecution. Things were going to get hard. Many of their lives would be taken. In fact 11 of the 12 disciples died martyr’s deaths. Jesus was giving them hope that this world is not all that there is. There is an eternal destiny waiting them all. We don’t know exactly when or what it will be like, but it will be a great place of wonder and joy that is for sure.

5. What difference does it make during suffering to know that better things are ahead?

6. Have you personally ever gone through something hard knowing that something good awaited beyond? What did that knowledge do to your motivation to persevere?

7. As you think about life here and now. How often does a future, heavenly existence enter your mind? If ever, how does that affect you?

Commentary: Perhaps the reason we don’t look forward to heaven much is that we are trying to get too much out of this world? We think that a relationship with the opposite sex will give us what we are looking for? Graduation? Sex? Financial Freedom? An awesome Job? A family? None of those are wrong, but they can supplant the true longing of our hearts- heaven.

I heard a sermon recently. He said when he marries people, he tells them it is like a junior high marriage. (You might not want him to perform the ceremony!) But he says that the earthly form of wedlock is by nature immature because it is just the junior version of the union that we are really intended for. It is just a glimpse to help us understand what awaits us in Heaven. No there will not be marriage in heaven between humans. We won’t need that. The true marriage for which earthly marriage was just a set of training wheels will finally be ours. God will be our bridegroom. Sex, money, power, prestige... all the longings of our soul will be met more fully in Him. They will be completely met in the longings from which those things stem from in our hearts. What a great goal to set our hearts upon rather than the trivial experiences here on earth. Oh, don’t get me wrong. All

those things have their places here and now and are indeed good things in their right contexts. But when we ask of them more than they are meant to give, we, society, our planet are in great danger. A definition of sin is when “good” things become ultimate things. We start to think we have to have things in order to find life. Jesus says that true life begins when we find Him and when we find Him it will be forever.

***Notebooks:** What are the things that replace God in your lives? Fill in the blank- I have to have _____ to be satisfied.

Ask: If “things” are not to take God’s place our lives, what has to happen in our hearts?

***Leaders:** This is a paramount question. This is the crux of our relationship with Jesus. It deals with the power to change and deals with whether or not we continue on in our “half-hearted” Christian lives. Jesus has to become greater to us. Jesus must be the greatest object of our affections. The reason we want other things is that we think that they are greater than the person of Jesus! It is hard to admit that, but it’s true isn’t it? If we really thought Jesus was the greatest thing or rather person and He calls us His beloved, we would desire no other source of satisfaction in life. We have to have Jesus illuminate our hearts as to His greatness. We need to experience this reality so that we are overwhelmed by His love, power and grace. There is a profound sermon written hundreds of years ago called: “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection” by Thomas Chalmers. I highly recommend assigning it this week to your group. It’s a tough read, but well worth it on this subject.
http://unccornerstone.org/hp_wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-Expulsive-Power-of-a-New-Affection-2.pdf*

**How would Jesus becoming greater in our affections change the way we view: school, our future jobs, relationships, money?*

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Section D. The Suffering of Jesus 14:1–16:8

Lesson 14– The Second Garden

[Chapter 14: 1–72]

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- What ironies do you see in this chapter?
- How do you feel as you read this chapter? What are your emotions? (guys- here are some emotion words: sad, mad, glad, ambivalent, overwhelmed etc.!)

Commentary: The heat gets turned up. Here begins the terrible glorious events of the Passion Narrative. Honor and then Betrayal, Community and then diversity, Eating and Drinking and great pain, Devotion and falling away, War and healing, Lying and truth... such are the great contrasts that will unfold. Read this section with awe and horror, joy and pain. Jesus is the great irony. He is the King who came to suffer.

LOOK:

Great Devotion and Great Rejection 14:3-9, 10-52, 66-72

Commentary: This is such a profound section that I actually shiver as I write about it. In the opening verses of the Wednesday before Jesus' crucifixion we have two people who stand in stark contrast with one-another. We have one, the woman with the perfume that beyond explanation, gives all she has to Jesus. We have another, Judas, who appraises the worth of Jesus and sells Him off to a bidder. One will leave wanting no glory but gaining great glory. The other will leave desiring glory but leaving empty to the point of death.

We then move on to Peter and the other disciples. In all that Jesus has done to prepare his followers, at Jesus greatest hour, He finds them sleeping. The contrast is palpable. You can cut it with a knife. A lowly woman who in passion gives all for Jesus vs. those men who have followed Jesus for years, and yet can't even stay awake. One would sell out for the lowly price of 30 pieces of silver (the least amount one's ransom could be appraised). The Woman's devotion would be criticized by the disciples yet their own devotion amounted to no more than great rejection.

The Woman 3-9

1. What do you notice about the woman's devotion?

2. What does the woman's gift and Jesus response reveal?

Many things are implicit. First, Jesus is pleased with the woman's worship of Him. This is not a carefully thought out, rigid, structural response to Jesus. This is passion for Him. She expects nothing in return. She only knows how great this king is and that He must be anointed as He heads to His Passover feast. Do you approach Jesus in such abandon?

Her appraisal of the worth of Jesus is beyond her ability to calculate. She seems to have given all that she has. Not only was the worth of the perfume of great value, most likely the “cistern” it was stored in would have been a family heirloom beyond price. She gave her wealth, her irreplaceable treasure and indeed her reputation in front of these great men.

The response from Jesus is amazing. Somehow this woman seems to understand the Gospel. She had received a free gift from Jesus that she could never repay. Surely this was NOT an attempt to give back what she had received. This was a response of worship from an encounter with God. When grace is experienced, abandon to norms of society flow. Her appraisal of Jesus is that He was worth everything and nothing less than such a response was worthy. Jesus then, sensing her heart not wanting any sort of commendation gives her great glory. “This event will be told in her memory”. Wow, Jesus knows faith and honors faith.

Commentary: *There is an old story told by C.H. Spurgeon. One day a landowner is approached by one his tenant farmers. The Farmer has grown a prize carrot and gives it to the king. The King is so pleased that he gives the tenant great wealth. Overhearing the situation was a greedy tenant. The next day this tenant brought the king one of his prized horses. Fully expecting the King’s reward he waited after the giving away. The king said, “thank you, now be on your way”. The tenant was furious. For he thought that if a carrot received such a great wealth, the horse would surely gain the kingdom. The king responded, “the carrot farmer gave ME his prized carrot, you gave the horse to YOURSELF”!*

Judas 10-11, 17-21, 43-50

1. Why are the two verses on Judas placed after the previous story?

Again, Mark is not only a historian but also a Theologian. He is making a significant point. Does the contrast scream out to you? The woman had appraised Jesus worth as beyond her own understanding. Yet Judas sells him out for a mere 30 pieces of silver. Judas is the one of privileged position in Jesus “cabinet”. The woman... was just that... a woman! In those days women had little value... but Jesus valued woman and the woman responded in faith. Faith is what Jesus was looking for.

2. We would all be the woman in this story right? Think about it though, would you have been? These two contrasting stories are intended to point the finger at us. What do you appraise Jesus’ worth at? 30 pieces of silver? Would you sell Him for that? How about for the respect of a certain group of people? A job? A girl, a guy? An easy life? Or maybe Jesus really is worth a lot to you. That is, as long as He gets you what you want. If he gets you safety and comfort, you value Him highly! If He gets you peace and satisfaction, that’s cool! If He gets you a good life and a good job, right on! But what if you get none of those? What is he worth then?

***Notebooks:** What do you place the worth of Jesus at? What have you sold Him for already? Share with the group.

Commentary: *I ask students all the time... why did you become a Christian or even, why are you now a Christian? Can you guess the most common answer? It has something to do with the joy and peace that they experience. Something about being fulfilled. While I don’t want to discourage joy and fulfillment, I would like to question that answer. In other words, would you still follow Him if there was a lack of joy and peace? Would you still follow Him if you did not feel fulfilled? I have to say that most of my life as a Christian has been characterized by differing amounts of those qualities. But I also have to say that at times, they are very far from my experience and as best as I can tell, not due to some sin issue in my life. We live in a fallen world and we don’t experience all that we are intended to experience with the Lord. Life is lived in an “already” saved and sanctified but “not yet” totally sanctified world. There is still hardship and pain where peace and joy seem to lag far behind.*

Why should we follow Christ? I think the ultimate reason is because He is true and right and real. He commands us to come under His authority and live in His kingdom. Despite what I feel day in and day out... and hopefully the feelings come along by his grace, but despite them, I have had my sins paid for by the King and so I follow Him. This is a hard concept in today's "me-focused", self-centered, religious-therapeutic world that we live in. But if I am a Christian because of how it makes me feel... whoa to us as the next Christian generation!

3. Notice what has changed this woman? Speculate...

Commentary: *See what Jesus calls the woman's action? He says, "she has done a beautiful thing to me". When someone does something beautiful isn't it often inspired by beauty? Our family has been traveling this week to the west coast. My oldest daughter has been "instagramming" pictures every day. She has a really good eye for beauty. The fact that she has been captivated by beauty is obvious and so she does beautiful things back. This woman has seen the beauty of Jesus and is simply responding to that beauty. I don't think she calculatedly got up that morning and thought that she would try and do something beautiful. She simply responded to the beauty of the person of Jesus. Do you want to change how you think and act? Look at Jesus! Wait though... don't look at Jesus as a model and try really hard to act like Him... that is "moralism". Look at Jesus and behold Him. Let your heart be in awe of Him. Then respond. Follow your heart as it sees Jesus' beauty. It won't be one short-lived action needing continual renewal over and over. It will be sustained by the power of Jesus beauty that He is able to stir into your heart.*

The difference between the Bible's Gospel message and every other religious message is that our moral action is not what gets us to God, it is the outflow of having gotten God. He comes to us on the cross and pays the price that we could not pay. We simply say "thank you" and are able to behold his beauty. As a mirror harnesses the image of the object to which it turns, so we harness the face of Christ as our hearts are turned towards Him. Try it this week. Turn your face towards Jesus goodness and beauty and see what it produces in you.

Peter 26-31, 66-72

Commentary: *You have to like Peter. I relate to him... he has no filter! Whatever he thinks, he says. Now I would like to think I have gained a bit of wisdom and hold my tongue from time to time, but really most of the time I would rather just blurt it out. We don't have to wonder about Peter. He is either red-hot for Jesus... or as we see here, quite the opposite. Vs. 31 ends with, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." Wow, what haunting words.*

Again, we have to remember back. In 9:29 Peter seemed to have gotten it right. "Who do you say that I am?" asked Jesus. Peter, "You are the Christ"! Way to go Peter! But it's easier to say than to believe and live. Now, when approached by a small girl... the great triumph of 9:29 seems to have been a lifetime ago. In fact the devotion proclaimed here in vs. 31 just hours ago... seems to have faded.

But the warning is for all of us, is it not? Help us Lord! We will sell you out for the saving of our reputation in front of a random small girl.

1. Be honest... where are you tempted to sell out that you don't really know Jesus for those that claim you do? (And don't tell me that you would never sell him out!)

2. What was it that Peter was missing that would have kept him strong?

Hint: it's got to be the same thing that kept the girl with the perfume from caring about the consequences of worshipping Jesus.

The Second Garden of Betrayal 32-42

1. We have to understand the suffering Jesus went through to fully appreciate His death on the cross. In this passage, what sort of emotions would Jesus have been feeling?

Jesus not only died a horrific death, but he was betrayed, let down, disowned and here, not even his best friends would stay loyal to his side. Jesus was a man and He felt all these things. Tempted to despair and give up. He did not.

2. What does it feel like to be let down by friends? Betrayed?

3. How does Jesus' suffering help us go through suffering and injustice?

Jesus suffered terribly so we know that we have a God who understands. That is truly comforting. We also know that He suffered to put an ultimate end to suffering and injustice some day. He suffered the greatest injustice that any human could ever experience. The perfect sinless God-Man, farthest from deserving condemnation endured injustice for you and I. He cares about injustice so much that He would die to end it. Some day, the world will be made right again. We can endure because of the great hope of what awaits. Injustice will bring about retaliation and war if we think we need to deal with it on our own. However, if Jesus died to end injustice, we can rest in that hope and absorb injustice rather than retaliate.

4. Jesus did not die that well! Really, look at his words and anguish. So many martyrs have died for Christian faith and they died better! (see below) Look at vs. 36. This is not what you would expect from the powerful King of the universe. Why do you think He was in such anguish?

Commentary: *Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake for their faith in Oxford, England, 1555. They were tied side by side, and when the fire was lit at their feet, Latimer said (famously): "Be of good cheer, Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day, by God's grace, light up such a candle in England, as I trust, will never be put out." At roughly the same time, John Bradford was burned at the stake with John Leaf. As the fire was being brought, he said to Leaf, "Be of good comfort, my brother, for we will have a merry supper with the Lord tonight." Both Bradford and Latimer raised their hands and prayed as they burned. There are innumerable similar accounts of Christian men and women who died for their faith with peace in their hearts.*

Commentary: *The dreadful sorrow and anxiety, then, out of which the prayer for the passing of the cup springs, is not an expression of fear before a dark destiny, nor a shrinking from the prospect of physical suffering and death. It is rather the horror of the one who lives wholly for the Father... Jesus came to be with the Father for an interlude before his betrayal, but found hell rather than heaven opened before him, and he staggered. – William Lane, Commentary on Mark*

Commentary: *"He was without any comforts of God — no feeling that God loved him... God was his sun before, now that sun became all darkness... He was without a God, he was as if he had no God. All that God had been to him before was taken from him now. He had the feeling of being utterly condemned, as when the Judge says: 'Depart from me, ye cursed... from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.' He felt that God said the same to him. Ah! This is the hell which Christ suffered. Dear friends, I feel like a little child casting a stone into some deep ravine in the mountain side, and listening to hear its fall — but listening in vain. The ocean of Christ's sufferings is unfathomable." – Robert Murray M'Cheyne, "My God, My God"*

Commentary: *Think about what was happening. Jesus was not just going to die. There was much more happening. Jesus was taking upon Himself the sins of the world. All sins, past, present and future. Can you imagine the weight he bore? This is no normal death. The Spiritual, Emotional and*

Physical anguish were all beyond our imagination. He would be separated from His father, cast away. He would enter into Hell and in Hell, His pain was more than any pain we would experience.

Here in the Garden, away from his friends and on-lookers, He got a taste of what was to come. He had a real choice. Would he flee from the anguish to come? In the first garden, a man, Adam was presented with a choice. Trust and obey God, or turn. He failed. Here Jesus, the second Adam, had a choice. Trust and obey God or turn. He trusted and obeyed God. Now, the first Adam's choice no longer needs to define us. Jesus followed through and His obedience can be credited to us. Jesus dies the death that we all deserve so that we can get the gift that only He deserved. What a savior.

***Notebooks:** Record your thoughts and emotions about Jesus' suffering.

***Commentary:** vs. 51-52 "They young man flees". This is a strange two verses. Why are they here? Many have speculated that the author is very familiar with this young man. Was it Mark himself? Why else would it be here? Mark may have heard of the commotion early in the morning and ran out in his undergarment. Perhaps Mark builds himself into the narrative?

The Trial 14:53-65

1. Describe the trial Jesus gets here. Was it just? Why not?

Of course he is not getting a fair trial. That is obvious. First, it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to hold a trial at night. Members of the judicial council had to be gathered in secret. Second, many bore false witness against Him because they had made up their minds regarding the conviction they sought. Third, He endured physical and verbal abuse. The judges and jury actually spit on God!

2. Observing Jesus in this situation, what help does it give us to endure injustice ourselves?

Jesus knew that there were greater forces in control. He was not responsible for setting the religious leaders in their place. He trusted His father for ultimate justice and did not need to retaliate. I need to hear and apply that. Jesus has dealt with injustice so I am not responsible to take things into my own hands. Certainly He wants to use us in this life to help eradicate injustice, but is not ultimately up to us. Also, when it comes to personal injustice, someone thinks wrongly of me, I am falsely accused, someone cuts me off in traffic, I do not need to respond in returning the action... or finger!

*What does this mean for us as we face injustice? Let's look at and respond to some examples. In light of Jesus dealing ultimately with injustice so that we can look to the cross when we experience injustice rather than look to be justified. How would you respond to the following?

- Let's say you are falsely accused of being a "gossip" at work, how would you respond?
- Let's say that in a group project, the "slacker" of the group gets the most credit for the "A" your team gets?
- Let's say someone makes you feel stupid by the way they talk to you?
- Let's say someone gives you the finger as they fly past you on the freeway?

Commentary: What a strange incident in the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter cuts off the ear of a soldier. Why is that in there and how did he cut with such precision? Isn't it obvious? Peter was not aiming for the ear. That would have been far too precise of a cut for a fisherman. Surely Peter was aiming for his head! Peter instinctively thought, "I have to save Jesus!" "I have to create justice"! Yet that is not how Jesus came. He did not come to fight injustice with more injustice. He came to obey the will of the Father. There were far greater powers at work that had been at work for all eternity in the arrest and suffering of Jesus. Jesus "must" die. He was on the road to death since birth... since before time actually.

Therefore, Jesus Christ forever changed what divine warfare against injustice means. The Messiah was expected to come as a warrior to overthrow captivity with power. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus heals the warrior whose ear was severed. He submits to death on a cross as a common criminal. Now, I am not talking about a political ideology of pacifism. I am talking about a heart condition that recognizes the ultimate injustice was given to Jesus. Therefore I can face injustice with a new spirit. Retaliation will never bring about justice. It will only fuel the cycle of injustice and hatred. Jesus is the only one that truly defeated injustice by enduring it and conquering it. So now I can absorb justice, looking at Jesus on the cross. I can love in return when love seems like the last option. Again, Jesus is not just the model. His death on the cross and defeat of injustice is the power.

3. Jesus is accused of saying, "I will destroy the temple... and in three days I will build another, not made with hands". In what ways did He really destroy the temple and in what ways was this figurative?

Jesus would destroy the purpose of the temple. The temple was a physical place that represented the presence of God in a physical location. When Jesus died, he removed the need for the physical temple replacing the temple with "temples"- each person who belongs to Christ. We are now the temples in which God lives.

In another sense, Jesus was the very temple of God. He died and rose again in three days. Therefore Jesus, the temple, was destroyed and was rebuilt. He took the sins of the world, bore them in death, and was raised again, free of sin and able to make new anyone who turns to Him.

4. What difference does it make that Jesus did not just die, but rose again? What does it mean for us?

If Jesus just died, He would not have conquered sin. It would have conquered Him. He rose again in triumphant display of life. Death did not defeat Him. He defeated death and so death no longer need defeat us.

If Jesus died and rose again, He also can offer "risen again" life to others. He does not just conquer sin for us. He is able to give us new life. He is now able to give us His very righteousness. It is one thing to have our sins dealt with. It is an entirely greater thing to have His righteous life imparted to us. We are not just a blank slate. We are brand new beings having the same beauty as Christ. This is life-changing reality.

5. If this is true- Jesus gives us life-changing righteousness, what would it practically mean for us? What does it imply about how Jesus changes our actions? What is the Jesus/Gospel way and what is the "moralism" way?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 15- Path to Glory

[Chapter 15:1-41]

HOOK:

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- Review: How would you define the Kingdom of God at this point?
- How does the death of Jesus affect you? Most of you have probably read it or heard it explained at church many times. Has it grown old or does it move you?

LOOK:

Jesus and the Roman Prefect

Context: When Rome took over Palestine, they placed prefects to govern remotely. The region of Judea was under the control of Pilate. He was the 5th in a series of prefects under the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Caesar. The Jews did not have the power to execute sentences of death so they had to have the authority of the local Roman prefect, in this case Pontius Pilate. Caught in political, religious, cultural turmoil, Pilate goes down in history having the dubious distinction as the one who ordered the death of Jesus.

1. Why didn't Jesus defend Himself?

Pilate, on paper, may be the one who ordered Jesus' death, but the grand story of the Bible tells a much different cause. God Himself ordered the death of His son. In recent times some have claimed that Christianity teaches child abuse in this sense. No, this is not an abusive father. This is a father who desperately loves ALL of his children including you and I. He sent His son as the ultimate sacrifice in order to set us all free. What more, this sacrifice lead to the Son's glory. It was not child abuse, but child exaltation.

2. Read vs. 16-20 on your own for a couple minutes. What are the ironies contained? How does this scene make you feel?

"The soldiers lead" (Jesus) away- Here the soldiers are just God's tools. They thought that they were in charge, but they are simply players in the grand story.

"The palace"- Jesus was in the supposed palace of the governor. He was tortured in the place of rule of Pilate. Pilate actually ruled nothing apart from what God allowed him to rule.

They put a purple robe and crown on Jesus- They meant to mock Him as a false king. Little did they know that He was indeed the true King and deserves a true robe and a true crown. He would indeed

"They began to salute Him, Hail King of the Jews"- Someday, all will salute Him and hail that He is indeed King of not just the Jews, but the whole world.

3. When you read this account of Jesus' crucifixion what strikes you as you see Him succumb to the torment?

Commentary: I am simply amazed that He goes through with it all. He could have stopped it at any time. How great does the pain, physical, emotional, spiritual have to get before He says, "enough" and hurls fire out of His eyes? His great love for us must have driven Him. However, even in that statement I think we miss the greater passion of Jesus and so miss Christianity. His love for us is

most certainly secondary. The greatest of all motivations was simply to obey and please His father. John 17:4 "I glorified you on earth by completing the work that you gave me to do." The Father's glory achieved in His obedience drove Him to the end. So, in today's world, it is quite easy to say that "love wins", or Jesus loves you and I. It is quite another thing to say that Jesus loved His Father. Jesus obeyed His Father's commands. Jesus glorifies His Father. The Father came to glorify Himself in His Son's death. God reigns over all. But surely this was Jesus' greatest motivation and lest we make ourselves the center of the whole world, even in Jesus' death, we must come to terms with what Jesus ultimately accomplished on the cross- the Father's glory.

There is another striking lesson in the mockery of Jesus. One of the themes Mark reveals to us over and over in the passion narrative is the mockery Jesus endured. The great irony is that Jesus endured mockery so that we would not have to endure ultimate mockery. When I read the accounts, I feel deeply that it was not fair! Why did he have to endure such injustice? There are two main thoughts I have.

- 1) Enduring Injustice: Jesus endured injustice to show us how we can endure injustice. Jesus, knowing the love of His Father, was able to absorb the mockery rather than retaliate. Just this week as I felt I endured injustice. As I experienced pain, I was tempted to retaliate in order to give pain in return. However, in a brief moment of spiritual vitality, I rather reflected on Christ's endurance of injustice. I didn't think, "Jesus endured injustice and I want to be like Jesus so I'll endure injustice, WWJD?!" That would simply be trying hard to endure and is short lived. I know this from experience. Rather, I thought, "Jesus endured injustice". "He dealt with all the injustice that I or anyone else will ever have to endure. Knowing the love of His Father is what caused Him to be able to stand during the pain. I know the Father through the Son and so I too can stand under the pain". Do you get it? Jesus is not just the model He is the power behind enduring injustice. It is not WWJD? (What would Jesus do?). It should be WHJD? (What has Jesus done?) I can actually begin to love the person from whom I experience pain despite not being shown love. Again, Jesus bore the injustice of the world for you and I. I no longer need to retaliate because it has ultimately been dealt with. I can live like Jesus because of what He has done for me.
- 2) Can we trust God? "I wouldn't have done it that way". That is what I think as I read of the mockery of Jesus. The on-lookers certainly agree with my assessment. In mockery, they put a sign above Jesus' head, "Hail, King of the Jews". Ironic yes, but what they were expressing is their lack of belief that a god would endure such suffering. "Of course this is NOT God", they thought. "God is powerful and mighty and would do things the way that they would do things". Have you ever thought the same thing? As you look upon the suffering of the world, perhaps your own suffering, have you thought, "God would not do it this way!?"

When I read this account, I realize that I do not understand God. At the same time, my understanding does not define God! When the centurion in vs. 39 acknowledges that Jesus is indeed the "Son of God" he is making a profound claim. This warrior was a strong man accustomed to seeing great suffering. When He saw the power of Jesus' suffering on the cross he exclaimed what no one else saw... this was indeed God and He was conquering suffering by suffering. Whenever someone deals with great injustice, it costs that person. Fighting poverty costs the one doing entering into the lives of others. Healing sickness costs time in education, hours of service, dedicated labor. The only way to ultimately deal with suffering and pain in the world is to suffer and endure.

If you are pained by the suffering of the world, your own pain, and are tempted to ask, "where is God"? Do not enter into despair. Jesus has done the required work to make things right. Someday all things will be made right experientially. As you look at the pain around you, direct your eyes to the cross. There is only one king that suffered and yet triumphed over suffering at the same time. Far from being silent, God screams to the world that He understands and is present in suffering. When we look at the cross, we can ask, "Why God? Why suffering"? The cross may not give a precise answer but one thing it tells us certainly, "It is not because God does not love us". He demonstrated His love fully beyond what we can even fathom.

4. Contrast the people of vs. 29-32, 36 and the centurion of vs. 39.

Commentary: *There are two ways to appraise the death of Jesus. One mocks and claims allegiance from the authority of God. The other marvels and bows at His feet. So in this life, there are two paths. One acknowledges that the King has come and bows in reverence and awe. The other marvels at their own autonomy in self-aggrandizement.*

By nature we are worshippers. We will all worship something. The question is not, “will you worship”? The question is, “what or whom will your worship”? If we will not worship God, we will find something to take His place. At the center of anything that takes His place will be our selves. Though the object of worship may take another name, its ultimate name is “me”. Therefore, though the path taken by the mockers would today be called enlightened and liberated, it is actually one of enslavement to self. As soon as we claim allegiance to anything or anyone but God, they or it will control us. The only one that truly sets us free is the one who died to give us freedom. The Bible tells us that in order to live the path of freedom, we must choose Christ.

5. Some have said that the question of vs. 34 is the greatest, most deeply profound question ever asked. Why, what is happening?

Jesus is right in his question. It is not a misunderstanding of His Father’s purpose. God was indeed forsaking Him! He was casting Him out of His presence. This was a unity that He had never done without. This was utter darkness and aloneness. This was the greatest pain anyone had ever or will ever experience. At the same time of His agony, he acknowledged who it was that was sending Him to this pain. The contrast of faith and pain concurrently was lived out in this question.

Commentary: *“My God, my God.” These words show the greatest faith that ever was in the world. Faith is believing the word of God, not because we see it to be true, or feel it to be true, but because God has said it. Now Christ was forsaken. He did not see that God was his God — he did not feel that God was his God, and yet he believed God’s word and cried: ‘my God, my God’... Jonah showed great faith: ‘all thy billows and thy waves passed over me — yet I will look to thy holy temple’ (Jonah 2:3,4). He was literally at the bottom of the sea. Ah, but a greater than Jonah is here! Christ was now beneath a deeper sea than that which covered Jonah. He was under a sea of God’s wrath — he was in outer darkness — he was in hell; and yet he believed the word of God. ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.’ Dear believer, this is your assurance. You are often unbelieving and distrustful of God — behold your surety! He never distrusted, he never disobeyed, even in hell! Cling to him — you are complete in him!” – R. M. M’Cheyne*

6. Why does “darkness come over the whole land”? Are there other marked times in the Bible where there is darkness?

Sometimes I wonder if we could pull back some sort of curtain that hides the spiritual world, what would we see. In the physical world during these hours, God allows us to see what was happening on a spiritual plane. Indeed, this was the greatest darkness anyone would ever experience. Ultimate darkness was ruling for a short time. This was also the greatest moment in the history of the universe. Cataclysmic spiritual realities were taking place. God was setting right what had been made wrong in the first Garden. The pain that began to take place in the second Garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, had now reached its climax. Jesus, the God-Man was dying on a cross. God was forsaking Him. Darkness enveloped the land on two different planes.

For the first mention of darkness in the Bible, you have to go way back to Genesis 1:1. Before the beginning, there was darkness and chaos. Here, at the death of Jesus, God allows darkness and chaos to return. What would the world be like if God withdrew his power? Darkness... God gives us just a glimpse of what Jesus was experiencing on the cross for us...complete darkness and chaos.

7. What is the significance of the temple curtain being torn in two?

***Leaders:** I have mentioned this before, but this is a ripe opportunity to drive this home. This is a great synopsis of the Gospel. Indeed, this is a great synopsis of the whole Bible. What Adam and Eve achieved was a spiritual separation between them and God. This separation has been imparted to us all. Angels were placed at the gate after Adam and Eve were removed from the garden. A barrier kept them, keeps us from God. That barrier was physically represented in the temple by a great, thick curtain. It kept the people, us, out of the inner sanctuary where the ark of the covenant, God's presence resided. Only the high priest had access to this inner sanctuary and that access was only granted once per year. In a miraculous display of the power and purposes of God, that curtain was ripped in two as Jesus breathed His last breath. Access to God was restored! There is no longer any barrier. That access is not obtained through the works or goodness of God's followers. The Son of God Himself made that access available. He did what you or I could ever do. He paid the price that you or I could ever pay. He bought us back with His blood of more worth than gold. Come in He calls. Come back to the Garden. I have made all things right.*

***Notebooks:** If all this is true, what difference does it make to you? Some of you may have already trusted Christ to bring you back to God. Some of you still have not. No matter your current place with God, what difference does this make?

TOOK:

What was most helpful, challenging or thought provoking?
What does it teach you about the KOG?
Who is Jesus in this section?
Why did He come?
How should you respond?

Lesson 16– On the Third Day

[Chapter 15:42–16:8]

HOOK:

Context: As most of your Bible will note, most of the reliable manuscripts do not include 16:9-20. It was likely added at a later time by some scribes wishing to give Mark's gospel a more flowing ending. This section will thus end with 6:8.

Read the Section: Who was Jesus and Why did He come?

Ask:

- If you were to end your own Gospel version, how would you end it? What stands out to you about the way that Mark ends his?

Watch #5: <http://www.history.com/shows/the-bible/videos/the-bible-recap-hour-9>

LOOK:

1. Talk about the kind of faith this took Joseph of Arimathea.

I wouldn't have asked Pilate for that permission! This must show that Joseph really believed that Jesus was God. All the others were dejected and beyond the ability to comprehend what had happened. But Joseph knows that this man was not just a man. Why else would it be worth risking His life to approach Pilate? Why would it be worth the potential ridicule and being cast out of the "Council"?

Do you see the irony? The disciples are all hiding. This Jewish leader approaches Pilate for Jesus' body. Who were the ones that dealt with the dead? The aristocrats certainly were not normally assigned this task! It was the slaves, even women who were the ones that had the task of preparing the dead for burial. Here again, the person of Jesus drives people to defy the norms. Joseph was captured by Jesus. He responded to who Jesus had shown Himself to be.

2. Some say that in today's modern, scientific world, Jesus rising from the dead is just too far fetched to believe. What do you think?

Honestly this one doesn't make much sense to me. I mean if God created the world, then raising someone from the dead is pretty much run of the mill. The greater question is if God is real. If He is real, then resurrection is not so difficult to believe is it? The existence of God question would take me much longer to discuss here. If there are those in your group who are struggling, you may want to give it some time.

The greater issue as I see it, is that none of our natures ultimately want and authority over us. If God is real, then he demands authority as the one who created us and knows us. This authority is not burdensome; it is what is good and right for us. When I was a kid, I loved to jump off things. One time, I had an idea to tie a sheet around my neck and jump off a roof. My mom didn't let me! Can you believe that, she said "no!" to me. I cried of course. I tried to reason with her. But in the end she won... and I am here to write this study today! We were designed to live under authority and if we do not live under that authority, there is great danger. As a child that does not completely understand life, physics, reality... so we too are children in our understanding of many things. Though we want autonomy, it really is not best.

Therefore, if I want authority of my own life out from under God's seemingly totalitarian control, I can simply claim "God is Dead!" If he is dead, there is no authority. (That is not really true if God exists,

we are under His authority whether we believe it or not.) If he is dead there are no miracles. If he is dead, there is no resurrection. So, if you think about it, it comes down to presuppositions. If I presuppose there is no god, then there can be no resurrection. On the other hand, if there truly is a God, He can subvert the metaphysical laws and do whatever He wants at any time. So the resurrection is quite simple! You might even say that such miracles are not “super” natural, but rather “natural” for God.

3. What does Mark tell us about God’s view of women when he introduces them as the first people to arrive at the tomb? What hope does it give all of us?

You have to get how extraordinary this commentary is in the day and age. Even if women were first upon a scene such as this, most historians would have included the detail. In the ancient near east, women were not highly regarded. They had very few rights in society. Men dominated and women were indeed subjugated. Man claim that the Bible condones the subjugation of women. But that is simply not true! The Bible gives an incredibly valuable place to women especially if you realize the context in which the Bible was written.

Here it is quite remarkable. Where were the disciples? I mean, seriously, “I will rise on the third day”, “I will destroy the temple and in three days I will build another”. Wasn’t Jesus explicit? Even if you were struggling to believe, wouldn’t you have at least gone to the tomb to see? Even on a whim? What else did they have to do? But here, these faithful women have gone down in history as the ones to arrive at the tomb first. In hope, in fear, in simple reverence? We don’t know, but they showed up. These women showed softened hearts. They are responding to the person of Jesus. If you are a male... is your heart softened by Jesus? If you are a female, would you show up to be with Jesus even in His grave?

Jesus acceptance and value of people is not determined by their social standing. Some of you come from a fairly high social status... sorry, Jesus doesn’t care! Some of you come from middle to low social status... again, Jesus doesn’t care. I mean he cares... but it doesn’t determine His level of care for you. He sees all of us as His special creation and those that trust in His work on the cross, He sees us as sons and daughters of the King.

4. Jesus has risen from the grave. What does this mean? (It means many things! List some:)

1. It means that he conquered death and so can now offer life. If he stayed dead, death would reign. Because He rose, now life reigns for those who turn to Him.

2. It means He was God because who else could rise from the dead? He did not just say that He was God. He proved it. When I think about why I believe in Christ, this is ultimately foundational for me. I can’t get away from the cross. It anchors my soul to belief in Him.

3. It means that when we become a Christian, this resurrection power is available to us. Eph 1 tells us that the same power that raised Him from the dead is now given to us.

4. It means that Jesus is alive today. Though we do not see Him physically any longer, one day we will see Him again. He has a physical resurrection body. He ate, people talked to Him, He walked, and people touched Him. In this we see the model of our true resurrection bodies that we will one day receive in place of our current bodies. His body was not the same. People struggled to recognize Him at first. But it was indeed a physical body and a model of what is to come.

5. There is hope even in death. Death was not the end. Death is not the end for us. The two greatest fears in life are public speaking and death! Public speaking is indeed scary, but death really is not! We are all eternal souls and our bodies are just a shell that will pass away. There is no one who is “mortal”.

so he opened not his mouth.
[8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
[9] And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
[11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
[12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.
(Isaiah 53 ESV)

TOOK:

Leaders: give them a good portion of time to work on the following. Perhaps you can compile a master group list and send it to me: miles@unc.edu

***Notebooks:**

- I said at the beginning that we must keep a look out for the question, “What is THE Gospel”? After studying Mark’s Gospel for many weeks now, what would he say The Gospel is?
- What would you include if asked, what is the Kingdom of God?

